

A comparative  
analysis of langston  
hughes's the negro  
speaks of rivers and  
sandra...



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History repeats itself in more ways than one and this statement reigns true for almost all aspects of life and this especially holds true with war. Over and over again we see destruction promises of repair and then many decades later another war emerges with the same carnage and promises. The most famous example of this would be Napoleon invading Russia and Hitler invading Russia and the outcome was the same for both men and armies.

The repetition that is most prevalent and either undermined or discarded though is the treatment of people and in particular minorities. The treatment of minorities and people of darker color is so outlandish and is visible throughout the world in countries and the whole continent of Africa which faced brutal imperialism and slave trading a couple hundred years ago. This quote worn on a shirt of famous rapper and Outkast member André 3000 saying " Across cultures darker people suffer most. Why?" This quote reiterates the idea that darker skinned people face more scrutiny and have a harder time in life than those of fairer skin.

America is the home of thousands of nationalities and ethnicities from all over the world but it is harder for immigrants and minorities to find their identity and make something of themselves while being happy and different but still holding on to their roots in from other countries but still being proud to be American. These struggles are no more prevalent and no more accurate than in the novel " House on Mango Street" by Sandra Cisneros and the poem " The Negro Speaks of Rivers" by Harlem Renaissance writer Langston Hughes. These two bodies of work detail the life of African Americans in the United States and a young Latina woman in the United States and their struggles of finding themselves and knowing where they

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came from while still moving forward in life and dealing with their hardships. In one of the outside sources which is titled " Straddling Boundaries identity culture and school" talks about kids struggling to find themselves and speaks on being able to find themselves in places like school where they learn about their history and their past. The other article " In search of identity in Cisneros's The House on Mango Street" it does focus on the main character Esperanza's life in America and all she has to deal with along with being a preadolescent female but struggling with the problems and unjust obstacles life has to offer and she has trouble finding herself and identifying herself and who she is in this world which often times can be unforgiving.

These two texts in theme of finding identity have similar narratives but set in different times. " The Negro Speaks of Rivers" talks about the struggle of African Americans as a whole and how lost they are in some cases due to the fact that they have been taken away from their home land and given new identities and new names that they are not familiar with and is not theirs. Langston Hughes is reminding us of this and who African American's are and where they came from and that they are not just slaves but much much more. " In House on Mango Street" it is about the life of Esperanza and dealing with life and people not understanding her in particular because she is a woman and she does not have the same freedoms as men do and also because she is not wealthy and lives in a terrible neighborhood people do not understand her as well. Being Hispanic in a tough neighborhood does not let her have the same opportunities as white people in rich or good neighborhoods and she states that they look down on her when they do look at her. She spends the whole novel contemplating leaving home to find

herself somewhere else because her barrio is not meant for that. Identity is a huge part of minorities an culture too but as you can see many minorities have trouble finding their identity in America the land of mixed cultures.

In “ The Negro Speaks of Rivers” author Langston Hughes he tries to bring a comparison to the negro of his time in the 1920’s and the ancestors who were the first to start civilization in the first thousand years of modern civilization in Africa. He wants to African Americans to reconnect with their roots. People have been almost tricked to forget where they came from and their greatness building the pyramids and creating monuments that millions of people around the world marveled at. The denial of this and the act of taking the truth away and discriminating against African Americans is racism which some say is America’s original sin and what Langston Hughes is fighting against in his poem “ The Negro Speaks of Rivers.” His motive is to uplift African American’s and to show them that they are worth more than what they were told to be, during the time of segregation and Jim Crow laws they still have a voice and a past to be proud of.

In the poem Langston speaks from a voice of an ancestor saying the he too knows. Although never being in Africa he speaks as if he was from there and this is the new way of writing because Hughes as a black man now has a voice and can say what he please as well as the way of writing it has changed to a simpler form but still resonates with people just not the super wealthy and those who can read. In this poem the first three lines reiterates features of Africa.

“ I’ve known rivers:

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I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow

Of human blood and veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep."

Hughes is talking about the Nile River and he is saying that it is as old as the earth and that it is ingrained in us in our body and we are the earth. He said that his soul has grown deep and it means that he feels as if he is attached to the earth and he is part of it. Another river is the Euphrates which has given life to so many people used for bathing, sailing, and fishing but it has also been here for a long time. What he means by this line is that he along with Africans have been on earth for a long time. The last line talks about having a home in the Congo and he fell asleep with the sound of the river.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen it's muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers;

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Hughes continues to talk about the Nile and how it raised people and was such an influence on the lives of the Egyptians at the time when they were using it for every aspect of life and it was a catalyst for them being able to flourish without that they would not have been able to make the pyramids. Hughes then makes a comparison to moving down the Mississippi to with Abraham Lincoln to New Orleans and how from having a muddy bosom to being a golden sunset which could annotate the transition from slavery to being freed with the emancipation proclamation. Hughes finishes the poem by saying that he knows these rivers old rivers and those that are shadowy his soul being an African American male has history and runs deep like the rivers.

“ The House on Mango Street” by Sandra Cisneros tells the tale of a young girl that is struggling to make it in America with hurdles that she has to go through. This text is different from “ The Negro Speaks of Rivers” because Hughes speaks for an entire group of people who have been hurt and had their identity taken away from them and he is also trying to make a connection between the present day negro and the African of early civilizations. “ The House on Mango Street” it talks about one specific character but can be used for many generations of Hispanic women growing up in America and millions going through the same struggle today.

Esperanza gives us her background at first and where she is living and how she got to mango street. Her father is always working and her mother is always at home watching over the kids, she has two younger brothers and one other sister. Esperanza is not very fortunate because she is not popular and it is hard for her to find a friend to tell secrets to. She has her sister but <https://assignbuster.com/a-comparative-analysis-of-langston-hughess-the-negro-speaks-of-rivers-and-sandra-cisneross-house-on-mango-street/>

it is not the same due to the fact that her sister is younger than her and cannot cognitively have a conversation with her because she is so young. However, Esperanza is always stuck watching her little sister so she cannot do what her brothers do and play or focus on herself because she is so busy with her little sister. Another way her life is different is because of her ethnicity she details how others do not understand her and how she depicted them looking at her and her people from the outside and not understanding their way of life. Esperanza dictates how people view her and people like her harshly and criticize them for living the way they do even though they are trying their best with what they can.

Again we see in "The House on Mango Street" like we did in "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" that minorities struggle to identify themselves and feel the need to overcompensate for their lives and actions to feel better about themselves. This comparison is significant because two different races fear the same things and two different authors writing in different times can still have the same view of their people and America as a whole. Being misunderstood by others and even misunderstanding themselves is something that they have to deal with while trying to identify themselves to their own selves while they are being told what to do by many other people. Although the authors of these two different texts are of different sexes, different races, and writing in different periods the problem remains the same.

As the quote from earlier still reigns true why do darker people suffer more across the world. History is repeating itself over and over maybe it is not the exact same way but if this is the result after decades of minorities living in America it is not a very good one and does not show progress at all. This <https://assignbuster.com/a-comparative-analysis-of-langston-hughess-the-negro-speaks-of-rivers-and-sandra-cisneros-house-on-mango-street/>

question is part of a problem that is rooted deep in the heart of America racism that has been embedded in the psyche of Americans but has been hidden and for a big extent subtlety regarded as false or not prevalent. These two texts ring them to live without blatantly shouting it out but by bringing us in the lives of minorities in the past and present and shows America not as the great nation everyone believes it is but one of flaw and not perfect like the humans we are, and although it is not perfect and neither are we we must strive for perfection to make this country the best it can for all people.