

Explication analysis  
of the poem sonny's  
blues by james  
baldwin



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In the poem "Sonny's Blues" written by James Baldwin was narrated from the perspective of Sonny's brother. The poem goes along to tell a story about an African American math teacher in 1950s Harlem, to his brother Sonny, a jazz pianist who has dealt with heroin addiction at a young age. Unlike many of the young boys in the neighborhood, Sonny is not hard or brutal. He keeps all of his problems bottled up except when he plays music. The narrator develops a better understanding of Sonny's Blues which was his struggle by finally listening to both his brother's words and his music. "I can't tell you much about how I got here. I mean I don't know how to tell you. I guess I was afraid of something or I was trying to escape from something and you know I have never been very strong in the head (smile)."

In this part of the poem Sonny is trying to say what he feels but he's at war with his feelings and his morals. This becomes very hard for him to open up because he's not used to being cared for and being asked to open up. "I'm glad Mama and Daddy are dead and can't see what's happened to their son and I swear if I'd known what I was doing I would never have hurt you so, you and a lot of other fine people who were nice to me and who believed in me. I don't want you to think it had anything to do with me being a musician." This part gets deep in the way that he's happy they can't see what he's become. Although at the same time there is a sense of innocence since he said "if I knew what I was doing" so in other words he didn't know what he was causing with his actions. "It's more than that. Or maybe less than that. I can't get anything straight in my head down here and I try not to think about what's going to happen to me when I get outside again." He is clearly at war with himself trying to decipher what things are right and which

are wrong. " Sometimes I think I'm going to flip and never get outside and sometimes I think I'll come straight back. I tell you one thing, though, I'd rather blow my brains out than go through this again." In this section, he's admitting to his wrongs and doesn't want to do those wrongs again.

Thus leading us to conclude that he is aware of his mistakes and doesn't want them to happen again. " But that's what they all say, so they tell me. If I tell you when I'm coming to New York and if you could meet me, I sure would appreciate it. Give my love to Isabel and the kids and I was sure sorry to hear about little Gracie. I wish I could be like Mama and say the Lord's will be done, but I don't know it seems to me that trouble is the one thing that never does get stopped and I don't know what good it does to blame it on the". Finally we are left to see that he wishes to be different but struggles to get passed what he's been through and move forward. In conclusion, we can see this internal war going on in his brain, battling his past and his emotions. He is left to fight and push past his old ways to be whom he knows he can be.