

# "the weary blues" by langston hughes essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Social Issues](#)



This passage is a poem written by Langston Hughes and it is called "The Weary Blues". It creatively displays the expression of the African American's struggle and perseverance through the use of songs and music. Also, like much of his poems, shows the struggles of African Americans and their strive for equality and freedom. The persona in this poem is describing the experience of listening to a blues musician in Harlem. Langston Hughes is showing the culture of the African Americans through the blues singer and the singer is using his song to express his feelings of sorrow and depression. The theme of this poem is that it presents how sad the typical life of an African-American expressed through music. This is shown in the poem when Langston Hughes wrote, "He played that sad raggy tone like a musical fool. Sweet blues! Coming from a black man's soul." Langston Hughes uses different literary devices such as rhyme, imagery, and diction, throughout the poem, which revolve around the theme and assist in presenting what it was to be an African-American during the Harlem Renaissance.

Firstly, this poem presented the structure is linking music with poetry. Hughes used stanzas and couplets to show the elements of blues music. Plus, indentations were also used to emphasize on the rhyme and repetition of certain words. For example, "I heard a Negro play" and "He did a lazy sway" (Lines 3 and 6). Another example is with the word "blues!" (Lines 11 and 16). The reason Hughes would choose to create his poem in this form of Blues is because blues offered a release of tension by expressing the anger and frustration felt by the African Americans that faced poverty and racial prejudice, which connects to the purpose and theme of the poem. Moreover, there was also a rhyme scheme that was effective to the poem and is linked

to the form of Blues as well. The rhyme scheme was structured as two lines of rhyme and then a repeated line. For example, in lines 9-16 there is a line of rhyme and in between the repetition of " O Blues" and " Sweet Blues!"

Another example in one of the indented stanzas that gives a part from the musicians song, " Ain't got nobody in all this world, Ain't got nobody but ma self. I's gwine to quit ma frownin' And put ma troubles on the shelf." (Lines 19-22). The rhyme with the words " self" and " shelf" puts attention on the lyrics of that part of the singers song. Therefore, after putting emphasis, it shows the readers that the singer has just said that he feels isolated and has no one to depend on but himself with all his struggles but then says that he needs to stay strong and put his struggles aside. This shows how the African Americans lived in sorrow but still had the perseverance to reach equality and freedom.

Secondly, Hughes used imagery as one of the ways to describe how life was like for African-Americans at the time. For example, in line 5, Hughes wrote, " By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light". This creates an image and puts emphasis on the opposing ideas of dullness and light. Readers can see a contrast being made as they can visualize the difference. This might show that there were ups and downs living at that time. However, this line might be more inclined in conveying a dark message as light has been linked to being " dull" or " pale". Thus, this is illustrating a very depressing and gloomy image to the readers with this impression of a lack of light in the African American's lives. Another example of imagery is in line 9 when Hughes wrote, " With his ebony hands on each ivory key". This line

demonstrates the discrimination and separation between the blacks and whites at the time. The contrast being made with this imagery is very effective as it is creatively showing the social discrimination by comparing the singer's hands and keys. The ebony and ivory, meaning black and white imagery ties in with the racial themes of the poem and of the blues. The anger and sorrow due to the racism in America at the time is what was the basis of blues music and Langston Hughes's poetry. Using the words ebony and ivory when talking about the keys shows how music was a part of this social discrimination, a way to express their emotions and present what was happening at the time.

Thirdly, Hughes also uses diction to further present the idea of unhappiness caused due to the racial prejudice at the time. Firstly, there were several words used that highlighted the tone of the poem of sadness and express the feelings of sorrow. For example, there was a use of words such as "melancholy", "droning", and "croon". These words emphasize the sad and gloomy tone of the poem, which gives the readers a better understanding of the meaning of the poem and the message trying to be conveyed by Hughes. These words also represent and reveal the feelings being expressed by the singer through music. Those feelings are of constant and thoughtful sadness, and a sort of tiredness caused by their monotonous and slow paced lives. This brings about the next point of the repetition of "weary blues" throughout the poem.

This choice of words is significant to the poem as it is also stressing on the idea of the constant sadness felt by the African Americans, which they

expressed through music. This is because the word weary can be linked to the idea of something that isn't going away, like the sadness that is lingering in the singer's life. This shows that the singer is expressing his dissatisfaction by putting it into words to help let out his feelings. Also, the choice of words of "sweet blues" in the poem is an interesting way to keep emphasizing the sadness of the singer and the message of the poem. There could be a sarcastic meaning to this diction, which is showing the sadness the singer is feeling and how he can't move away from it. However, it can also have a humorous meaning to show how the African Americans persevered through the hard times and used music as an outlet to express themselves.

Overall, this poem successfully conveys the idea of expression through music to ease the tension caused by social prejudice that took place at the time. The African Americans struggled a lot through this time and there wasn't always much they could do about it. They felt miserable and stuck with hopelessness but still tried to persevere through it all. One of the ways they persevered through everything was by putting their feelings in songs, which helped make their voices more heard. Many of these aspects and others from the poem can be related to the world today. This is because even though racial discrimination isn't as huge as it used to be, there still is some attitudes found in the world by people showing carelessness towards social and racial prejudice or even conflicts of religious matters. For example, in the Arab world there is a lot of conflict and corruption relating to political and religious views. Plus, the humorous twist to hard times that is sometimes apparent in artistic work of the Harlem Renaissance can be seen today. In this poem, Langston Hughes used many literary devices, such as structure,

imagery and diction to show the point being made of the expressed sorrow within the poem.