

# "lenox avenue: midnight" critical response

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



A poem about night life in the 1920s, on one of Harlem's main streets, may sound full of drama, high class society and scandal. Langston Hughes' poem "Lenox Avenue: Midnight" however, combines none of those things. Hughes' poem combines the rhythm of life, the sounds of the night and heartache, to give the reader a beautiful, sad picture of life on Lenox Avenue in 1926.

"Lenox Avenue: Midnight" gives the reader a song-like feeling with a rhythmic quality that is ripe with imagery. The rhythm of a poem is always important, as it helps the words flow more easily through the reader's mind or mouth. The rhythm of this poem relates to the blues and jazz music that was played back in the 1920s. The poem states, "The rhythm of life/ Is a jazz rhythm," This refers to all the music that was played along Lenox Avenue at clubs such as the "Cotton Club" and the iconic "Savoy Ballroom". Hughes also invokes imagery with "Lenox Avenue: Midnight". He talks about the rumble of the street cars going past on the street, completing their nightly runs. The swish of rain as it cascades down. These sounds help the reader really get a good sense of what the common sounds would be in 1920. The rain would have made the day and the people gloomy and sad. Some people who work on the streets, like street vendors, would not be able to work because of the rain. The imagery and rhythm create an amazing depth to the poem.

"Lenox Avenue Midnight" is a great poem, however it can be a bit confusing. Langston Hughes uses his view of the Harlem Renaissance to convey the feeling of Lenox Avenue. If the reader is unaware of what the Harlem Renaissance is, they may have a different message than the author intended. Some of the wording of the poem is also confusing. The poem says <https://assignbuster.com/lenox-avenue-midnight-critical-response/>

"Overtones,/ Undertones," talking about the overtones and undertones of life and music. The reader can be very unsure of the meaning of this if they are not familiar with how music works. Rereading the poem several times to understand this phrase might be necessary. It would have made more sense if Hughes had written "Overtones,/ Undertones,/ Of life". This would help the reader to understand what the author's meaning is. In "Lenox Avenue: Midnight", Hughes writes "Honey,/ The gods are laughing at us." He is talking about how the gods seem to be rich, laughing at the struggles of the poorer people.. However, if Hughes is talking about the gods in a sense as though they are characters in the poem, that is not made clear because the word "gods" is not capitalized. The reader assumes that Hughes did not mean for them to be characters in the poem, and that they are simply religious entities. Hughes' poem is an interesting read, with a few complications.

Langston Hughes' "Lenox Avenue: Midnight" a poem about the Harlem Renaissance, encapsulates nightlife during the 1920s. It has a jazz and blues rhythm, which was the music played in the 1920s and lots of imagery to give the reader a picture along with sounds that would have been heard in Harlem. Hughes' poem is an insight into Harlem, yet there are some drawbacks. The wording of his poem is confusing, leaving the reader unsure of the message the author is trying to communicate. Despite all of that, the poem is a beautiful piece of work which everyone should read at one point or another. "Lenox Avenue: Midnight" brings together music and poetry for a wonderful result!