

A reading response on james baldwin, "sonnys blues" essay sample

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I find the reading a psychologically rich homage to recent history. James Baldwin as the author of this story would have been contemporary or participant to conditions much like conditions that this family lived under. James Baldwin was a black man who had come of age in inner city USA through WWII and the civil-rights era. He beautifully demonstrates the psychological effects of living in a paradoxical society. On one hand America was the bastion of liberty and justice throughout the world; on the other hand, it existed under the yoke of racism and other injustices.

This short story by James Baldwin is a display of the psyche of black men coming of age in the midst of such a paradox. The story portrays a people who participate in the execution of American justice on the world stage while internalizing deep anger in regard to the injustice thrust upon them on the home front. In this context, family is important but fragile to the brunt of internal anger and surrounding difficulties. Although "the war" is not a heavily visited theme in the story it serves the purpose as a back drop to living in the paradox. A man could be off fighting for "home" while understanding that what he holds dear to himself at "home" may not be there when he gets back.

All along a black man's return home in this context always means coming home to a world that "ain't [sic] changed." James Baldwin pens well the fragility of a culture stuck in a paradox. He even discusses the results of consistently internalized anger: brand new projects are expected by the

characters to become run down and unfriendly, drugs become a mode of emotional survival, and fatherlessness is a mark of the day.

[Thesis: Diving into the author's personal history and how he relates to the story may be the best approach to take. This approach will allow for a rich analysis of the power of psyche and cultural context.]