

"what a wonderful world" a poem by louise armstrong

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



"What a Wonderful World" is a poem by Louise Armstrong where he uses breathtaking lyrics related to affected people. The poem is easy to understand; at the same time, it is meaningful and deeply rooted in the miserable lives of the African-Americans. The rhyme scheme of this poem is very rhythmic that creates a soothing atmosphere. Armstrong uses a great amount of imagery that helped the Harlem activist to recollect their memory and join in movement with greater fervor. In the first stanza, Armstrong says, "I see trees of green, red roses too, I see them bloom for me and you" (1-2). Here the poet gives messages to the black that though they are suffering and are far from getting their ideal rights, still there is hope to get that equality. He says life always gives a way of success.

Instead of using negative words and sentences, he uses very positive words. For example - he uses the word "blessed" and "sacred" which have similar meaning. By doing this he carefully tries to infuse positivity in the black people's minds. In the fourth stanza he says "The colors of the rainbow so pretty in the sky / Are also on the faces of people going by / I see friends shaking hands saying how do you do / They're really saying I love you."

Here, the poet says that the disastrous time has ended. African-Americans were very religious so the poet says God gifted them with "rainbow." Here "rainbow" connotes a positive image. Again, the poet shows the image of equality where the blacks get their own identity; both Blacks and Whites become friends to each other. The poet uses "really" from that we can infer that African-Americans were desperate to get their individuality. In the last stanza Armstrong says "I hear babies crying." Here, "babies" refers to the next generation and Armstrong is the witness as he "watch them grow." He

says these babies will get more opportunity to acquire knowledge as they know more from their family, their ancestors.

Four times the poet uses " what a wonderful world" which spreads peace and optimism among the Blacks. From this repetition the Blacks gain energy to see a better world where every race and culture will get their own identity. Moreover, there is a repetition of " I" which literary means one individual but we can infer that by saying " I" repeatedly, he means the whole African-American. This single persona is representing the identity of a whole race. Jazz as a form of art was closely tied up with the African-Americans' literary work at the time of Harlem Renaissance. This music has a profound connection with the Blacks. It brought rigorous changes in the music industry. People in this modern world are addicted to this form of music. The rhythm it has is very delightful and anyone can dance freely with its sound. The reason why jazz music had so much success is because the content matter was melancholic and very organic. This fit well with the African-American nature. Also, music is more memorable than other forms of literature like prose and poetry. At the time of the Harlem Renaissance, out of the many changes that have been brought out in America through African-American culture, Jazz music was one of the rich cultures that the people of the world welcomed with open arms, solidifying the Black's new identity.

Another point that helps African-Americans to get their identity is their diacritic language. Language and literature are closely tied up because it is through language that we incorporate literary works. Language is the means to compose literature. African-American Vernacular English has lots of

variation. Usually, the language of the Blacks is very informal. Their phonological terms like vowel, consonants along with grammar - especially tense - has variations. Additionally, Africans-American vocabulary differs a bit from English; it also has different pronunciation. For example- " ask" > " aks", " library" > " liberry", " friend" > " fren". We find this unique quality of African-Americans in Langston Hughes' poems. " Po' Boy Blues" is about a poor boy who has migrated from the south part of America to the north during the time of " The Great Migration". He was recalling his cheerful past and says that "[s]unshine seemed like gold" in the south. But now, in the north, he is tired of his life as he says, "[whole damn world's turned cold". Here, the word " cold" has two different connotations.

The north part of America consists of areas like New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago which are very cold areas. On the other hand, the south part of America has a warmer temperature. Figuratively, " cold" refers to the miserable life of the Blacks that they suffered because of slavery. Again, African-Americans were very religious so the boy asks his god that he " never done no wrong" so why would he suffer? His mentality is naïve in the sense that God will protect innocent people. He has even been betrayed by a " gal" who he thought was kind. So, he is of the struggling life and says " weary, weary / Early, early in de morn." Hughes' " Po' Boy Blues" is a very good example for different linguistic patterns. The title " Po' Boy Blues" itself is very informal. Other words which set an informal tone are as follows: " de" that has several meanings (like " the" and is also something that African-Americans attach to the end of their sentences"), " gal" referring to " girl", "

damn" (which is even a slang), " an" instead of " and", " ma" instead of " mother". African-Americans tend to use present perfect tense instead of past indefinite. For example - in " Po' Boy Blues", Hughes uses " never done" instead of " never did".

Repetitions in African-American poetry is very evident. There are lots of repetitive words and sentences. In the first and second stanzas he repeats sentences, " Sunshine seemed like Gold [...] Sunshine seemed like Gold" (2-4) and " Never done no wrong [...] never done no wrong" (8-10). Hughes uses the word " weary" six times, emphasizing his despair. The language, as we can see, is quite simple. This is so that the ordinary people could make sense of the poems, as the poems were directed at them. Before the revolution, Blacks did not have the privilege of education, and so obviously the common mass could not understand sophisticated language. Thus, African-American writers employed a very simplistic language to their writings, and Langston Hughes was no exception.

There are many poems of Hughes where we find this uniqueness of language. " Young Gal's Blues" is one of the poems of Hughes where variation is very evident. Chinitz in his journal " Literacy and Authenticity: The Blues Poems of Langston Hughes," talks about language patterns on " Young Gal's Blues" poem and says, " This surely applies to " Young Gal's Blues" in which Hughes avoids the conventionally " poetic" language and ideas that the subject of death, aging and love sometimes elicit in his ordinary lyric poetry, but how folkish is the voice we hear in this poem? Spellings like po' and de point up the speaker's dialectical pronunciation, yet

her grammar is standard. Her stanzas cohere, too, with a logic that would be remarkable in an improvised folk composition, where the verses generally relate to each other not through a rational progression but through a consistency of mood, music and theme." (180)

Dominance in literature in Harlem Renaissance was not only an active part, but also fashion trends at that time took revolutionary changes to conquer the battle, which helped African-Americans to get a new identity. By seeing the word " fashion" we think that it can be related to female fashion trends in Harlem. Surprisingly, male and female both used their fashion sense, changing precursory fashion aptitude. Men wore zoot suits, which were very popular at that time. Zoot suits are a type of long jackets with baggy pants. In addition, they wore Raccoon coats which was of full length. They used to wear V-neck sweater as formal day wear. Sportswear was introduced at that time. Silk shirts, stripped textiles, cuffed trousers were also used. Moreover, they used hats with feather, long chain, pocket square, pocket watches, handkerchief. Brogue shoes, oxford shoes, two-tone shoes, patent leather wingtip shoes were also part of men's wear.

Talking about women, they are always very much concerned in fashion. However, the women at the time of Harlem Renaissance were exceptional. Their sense in fashion was very high and sophisticated. At that time day and evening dresses were introduced. They wore loose dresses in day time and at evening they used to wear elegant short dresses. Black women wore different types of gowns. Flapper dress was very popular among themselves. Moreover, there were different cuts of flapper dresses like, for example-

jigsaw flapper, fringe flapper. Their dresses were embellished with sequins, beads, rhinestones and pearls. They wore silk gloves, fur shawls around their neck, and matching hats or headpiece. Most of the time they took on high-heeled shoes.

African-Americans also introduced masculine appearance. Sometimes women cross-dressed in men's clothes. Mixing up with the boys, drinking, smoking, casual sex – these all were a part of their fashion which created their strong identity. Normally, women like to have long hair but at the time of new Negro movement women transformed their hair style into short hair look. Coco Chanel was one of the prominent contributors of The New Negro movement who was a fashion designer. She wanted to help women fulfill their longings and to be polished. These fashion trends of Harlem renaissance are a gift to this present world. In today's world many a fashion enthusiast follows their trend.

Through their sense of style, they illustrate their status, personality, gussy attitude which smartly brought their identity in America as well as in the world. Macy's, Inc. a brand, published an article named "Macy's Salutes Culture-Defining Eras of Black Style in Celebration of Black History Month 2014," which says, "From the Harlem Renaissance to urban wear and high-fashion glamour, Black style has influenced popular culture for decades. Through special events and panel discussions at select Macy's stores across the country, style experts and thought leaders, such as famed fashion editor Constance White, supermodel Beverly Johnson and actress Tracee Ellis Ross, will highlight the uniqueness of Black fashion and how many of these styles

have been adopted, reinterpreted and reinvigorated by new generations, inspiring countless fashion-savvy ladies and gentlemen of today."

From all this discussion, it is clear as to how the Harlem Renaissance served to not only abolish slavery in the name of race equality, but also created a brand new identity for the Afro-Americans. This identity of theirs is mainly distinct in their choice of music, clothing, and simple language. There is a saying which goes, " in the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity." Therefore, it is not false to say that the Blacks had no identity at all when they were slaves, and so they were not even alive. Nowadays, the situation of black-skinned people, while not perfect, is exponentially better. Now that they have got an identity of their own, they can live.