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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Souls of Black Folk is an early twentieth century book authored by William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963) which had an influential impact on African American intellectual life. The novel, which is a compilation of fourteen prose pieces, responds to the Emancipation Proclamation set by Abraham Lincoln to deliver the blacks from the yoke of slavery. In the novel, Du Bois addresses the movements and struggles of the entire black population in the twentieth century. Du Bois gives an evaluation of the advancement of the African Americans, the hindrances to that advancement, and the opportunities for future advancement as the U. S. entered the twentieth century.

The novel can be conveniently separated into three different sections. The first section consists of chapters one to three, which have a distinctively historical perspective. Chapters four to nine portray a sociological point of view.

Lastly, chapters ten to fourteen express the author's efforts to capture the spiritual meanings of the black culture. This complete seminal work endeavors to look into the black American mind while maintaining the message in the title of the novel. The implication of the title is evident in the early pages of the book. In the book, Du Bois depicts the condition of the blacks as separated from the whites. However, this separation from the repressive white culture is only by means of a metaphorical veil, which produced the effects of double-consciousness. This implies that even though they were separated from the whites, the blacks were compelled to view themselves through the eyes of the whites as well as their own.

In this sense, an African American always felt his or her twoness. This twoness included being an American and a Negro at the same time, having two souls or two imaginations, or two differing opinions in one dark body (Du Bois, 4). *The Souls of the Black Folks* played a pivotal role during the Harlem Renaissance. The book achieved this by providing guidance and motivation to the talented young African Americans who were the vehicles for change during this period (Young, 96). During the Harlem Renaissance, much progress was made in the community of African Americans. One such advancement was the privilege that the African Americans had of getting education, regardless of the fact that there were inadequate resources in most black schools.

Most blacks made the most out of this opportunity. During this period, changes in the political climate of the U. S.

enabled the blacks to fight for their rights. In supporting black higher education, Du Bois criticized Booker T. Washington's vocational education system by asserting that the system was too economical.

Moreover, he argued that it would not provide the blacks with the opportunities to develop. *Souls* also call on the blacks to fight for their fundamental political privileges such as pursuing their right to vote and protecting their civil rights. The symbolism in establishing the black identity as an important aspect of the American history portrayed in the novel served as a source of inspiration for blacks during the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-twentieth century (Horne, 223). *Souls* reinforced the stand of the black community in the United States. The success that Du Bois had in fighting for

the rights of the blacks demonstrated to the leaders of the Movement the abilities they had in store which were just waiting to be released. During the Reconstruction period after the American Civil War, everyone was dreaming about equality among the races.

However, these dreams were blown apart at the turn of the century. Souls depict this deplorable condition. This reality resulted in a united cultural identity among the African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement. Therefore, this served as a conscious awakening for them to unite in fighting against racial segregation.

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