

The theme of suffering in sonny's blues

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In 'Sonny's Blues,' James Baldwin explores the theme of suffering experienced by two African American brothers who faced difficulties: housing, employment, drug addiction, imprisonment, and suicide. Both of the characters in 'Sonny's Blues' Sonny and the narrator change over the course of the story.

In the beginning of "Sonny's Blues" the narrator read about Sonny's arrest in a newspaper charged for using and selling heroin. This take back caused to question Sonny's identity way back to childhood because when Sonny was 'wild, but he wasn't crazy' (4). Home was a tough back living in Harlem. The home is a physical place in 'Sonny's Blues,' but it's also an idea. The idea of home had many different meanings within the memories of the household. Home is comfort, conflict, grief, suffering, and caring all combine into one. Its roof is built up people living there. Home is a symbolic way of showing a place where someone feels that they belong. "These boys, now, were living as we'd been living then, they were growing up with a rush and their heads bumped abruptly against the low ceiling of their actual possibilities." (5) Suffering shows in many different ways. Living in Harlem They suffer from the limits that their circumstances have forced them with.

Drugs are essential theme in 'Sonny's Blues,' interfering with both the users and those who love them. He had been picked up, the evening before, in a raid on an apartment downtown, for peddling and using heroin. (3) This is the first time we heard about Sonny or his drug use. Addiction can start when an individual feels lonely or is isolated from the friends and family. They turn to drugs and alcohol thinking that it will fill a void that they have been living with. People lacking positive daily interaction may choose to use

substances to feel happy or content. It's also sign of darkness when someone is suffering clinical depression.

The idea of suffering lingers over 'Sonny's Blues.' Every character suffers in a way from grief, addiction, limited opportunities in life. The constant presence of suffering wears the characters down, and while some are adjusted to it, others continue to fight it. Suffering is expressed in multiple ways in this story through music, drug use, on people's faces, through the ways they incorporate with one another, and even through recurring nightmares. Although suffering is more immediately present for some characters, it's a part of all of their lives. The two brothers in this story clearly love one another, but they don't understand each other and they don't approve of each other's lives. The narrator creates a family with his wife and children who so happen to be a mathematics teacher as well, and Sonny creates a family with his fellow musicians. "He came by the house from time to time, but we fought almost every time we met." (173) Sonny and the narrator love each other, but they just can't get past the differences in their lives, their choices, and their ideas about right and wrong.

Sonny starts to talk about suffering and about trying to escape it by using drugs. He talks about playing the piano and the reasoning why he plays. He tries to explain to his brother why he turned to drugs, but the narrator doesn't want to hear it at first. The narrator blames the music and the people he surround himself with for leading Sonny to heroin, and he tells Sonny how upset he is that Sonny seems determined to end his life by being an addict. Sonny gets just as upset for his brother never reaching out to him after his

arrest, for not accepting that people have different ways of dealing with things, and for not understanding that being a musician isn't what turned Sonny into a drug addict. " You don't know how much I needed to hear from you. I wanted to write you many a time but I dug how much I must have hurt you and so I didn't write. But now I feel like a man who's been trying to climb out of some deep, real deep and funky hole and just saw the sun up there, outside. I got to get outside. (49) Sonny suffers from many different things. He suffers from his drug addiction and from being stuck in jail. But he also suffers from the knowledge that he's hurt his family and that, because of this, he didn't dare reach out to them even when he needed to the most.

At the very end of the story, the narrator has come to watch Sonny play piano at a nightclub, and it seems that he finally sees how talented his brother is. But more importantly, he also seems to see that music is a part of Sonny. As a gesture of this new understanding, the narrator sends Sonny a drink, which he places above him on the piano as he plays. At first his brother was inconsiderate and only looking at things in his perspective. Not saying drug is the key to help you cope with your problems but everyone handle their issues differently. Sonny so happen had use drug as his way with coping with his past and current life. In life we tend to make comments about the way people handle things more than looking at things vice versa. However the narrator finally let go what was and realize what is to have a open mind to understanding his brother. With this in mind, Sonny and the narrator pays respect to one another at Sonny's performance. Above all, their bond has preserved through the hardships and new their relation continues to grow as they build a new foundation.