

Sugar cane alley assignment



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Sugar Cane Alley Jose is a type of person that anyone could look up to. He's strong, smart and doesn't let people walk all over him. Throughout the movie he becomes a stronger and stronger person. He goes through two deaths of two people who are very influential in his life, let alone the death of his mother. His grandmother, Ma Tine, raises him. She is a very influential person as well, because she has only the best in mind for her grandson. Although Sugar Cane Alley takes place in Martinique, well after slavery was abolished, the way Jose and Ma Tine live reflect many of the same ideologies of slavery from many years before.

In Martinique almost everyone works, they cut sugar cane which is barely enough money to live off of. The only way to advance and make something of your self is to do well in school. This is exactly what Jose does; he studies hard and takes an exam granting him permission to attend a school in Fort-de-France. Unfortunately, Jose is only accepted a partial scholarship, forcing Ma Tine to be a laundress so Jose can go to school. I was very surprised as to what a hard worker Jose was. He's a brilliant kid and many people around him know it. The effort he put in to his schoolwork says a lot about who he is and how he was raised.

He sets a great example for his plantation. Although Jose is a talented student, he often gets caught in mischievous activities. He drinks a little too much one-day, and burns a shack down, as well as throwing a rock at his teacher. I believe that Jose was just being a typical kid in these instances but something that is very striking is the close family ties. The relationship between Jose's grandmother and Jose plays a huge part in Jose's education.

It is obvious that being close with your family is very common to African culture. A general theme that I saw in this movie stresses respect for elders.

Jose has learned a lot of different things from his grandmother, but the most significant thing he learned from her was respect. I believe this is why Jose cherishes Mr. Mdeouze as much as he does. He respects him greatly, and learns from him. Mr. M would tell Jose stories at night about Africa and how he wants to go there someday. Jose seems very intrigued by these stories and goes back to Mr. M for more. Jose learns to be creative while listening to his stories; the stories allow him to imagine what Africa would be like and why Mr. M wants to go there so badly.

To me, Mr. Mdeouze plays a bigger role in Jose's education than Ma Tine does. For one of Jose's homework assignments, he has to write a paper. For his paper he wrote a story in his own words and submits it to his teacher. The paper is so powerful and moving that the teacher accuses Jose of plagiarism. Jose is so upset at this and in turn he flees the school. Later on he goes back home and his teacher is there with his grandmother. The teacher tells Jose that he apologizes for the accusations and also says, "some day you are going to be a very good writer. Mr. Mdeouze influenced Jose to write that incredible story. He told him enough stories to open up his imagination and produce a beautiful paper. Mr. M taught Jose the power of language. For extra credit for this class, I listened to an interesting lecture about African Storytelling. This is what Mr. M reminded me of. Traditional storytelling is usually told by adults and spoken to children about life, rewards, and consequences. The fables are usually metaphorical stories that have to do with lessons children will learn in their daily lives.

While Jose listened to Mr. M's stories, he wasn't only listening to Mr. M's dreams and aspirations he was learning new life lessons with every story. Throughout the movie, there is noticeable tension between the white people and black people. A scene would be shown of the lifestyles of the black people working in the cane field, they look exhausted and miserable. A few seconds later there is a scene shown of Leopold's house, which is beautifully furnished, it seems like his family has everything they need. I thought it was very powerful how the scenes were shown.

One would be a very depressing scene with Jose living in a shack with a dirt floor, and the next would show Leopold's house. This was meant to create tension in the movie. Although this was something that jumped out at me, there were many other things that showed tension through Leopold.

Leopold's father saw him playing with Jose one day. He was furious by this and hunts Leopold down and tells him he can't hang out with Jose. Shortly after this scene, Leopold's father is lying on his deathbed and refuses to say that Leopold is his son. Leopold's mother is black, which means that he is a mulatto.

His father is noticeably ashamed by this and says that he can't inherit the land or his name. "It's always been a white name, it doesn't belong to mulattos," said the dying man. Even though that was his son he was talking to, he was still able to treat him so poorly. This shows me that this type of tension was still going on in the world, many years later. His father was still able to see him as a mulatto, not as his son. You then see Leopold being taken away with his wrists bound. I believe that his father ordered to imprison him because he was so ashamed of him.

I thought it was very interesting that his father was able to do this. His wife is black, and he doesn't do anything to his wife so why is he taking all his anger out on his mulatto son? As I was listening to my professor's lecture about the mines in Southern Rhodesia, I found it to be very similar to the lives of the characters in the movie. In the movie black people worked on a white mans plantation, barely earning enough money to survive. The system in which Jose lives is a system of total control, similar to the compound system.

The miners are like the slaves. They can do very little but work, and get paid a small amount. This is very similar to the slaves in Martinique. All they could do was work in the cane field, unless you were a kid. Kids went to school. Something I did find different about the two systems though, was that the compound system fought back more often. They did this through many different ways. They would lie, desert the plantation, fake sick, or just not work as hard. It seems like it was much easier for the workers to do this on the compound plantation.

The plantation in the movie seems stricter. If you are caught " loafing" there are usually punishments. What I found interesting though, is that the workers are very sneaky; they think of creative ways to beat the system but the owners still have much control over them, similar to the system in the movie. They control their leisure time, their food, and even their religion. Similar to the other system, the black people are told when and for how long they must work. They don't have enough money to live in a house like the whites and they must obey their owner.

So what I noticed is that although there are some definite differences in the two systems, they are pretty alike and many of their characteristics overlap. Overall, I really enjoyed this movie. It showed how hard life would be to be living as a black person in Martinique. I believe that Jose would be very successful in his future if he were a real person living then. He perused his education, which is what you had to do in order to become anyone. He had many people helping him along the way including, Ma Tine and Mr. Mdeouze who were the most influential people in his life from what was seen within the movie.