

A dream deferred

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Langston Hughes' poem, A Dream Deferred, is about the sentiments of African American people back when they were great oppressed and marginalized (Hughes).

They were denied of a dream, of a better life and a better world just because of their skin color and their ethnicity. Looking closely at the poem, we can see that the elements used by Hughes could clearly show the readers how much he felt back at that time when he wrote it.

It is important to analyze the poem through its parts first and then its entirety so that we'll see how Hughes came up with a short but very effective poem.

Hughes used several literary elements all throughout his poem. The first one is the use of rhetorical questions, where we can see that the poem is structured as a questions related to deferring a dream. These questions tend to answer themselves in the end, and this is where the use of the next element, simile comes in. He uses it to describe every situation that he gives relating to a dream deferred.

One example is “ Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun, where he used “ like a raisin in the sun” to describe the “ drying up” of the dream (Hughes). From this, it is evident that it also uses the element imagery when describing, including “ fester like a sore,” “ stink like rotten meat,” and a lot more (Hughes).

Through these literary elements, we can see how much emotion the author has regarding this topic. As an African American, he had his fair share of discrimination, which led to his dreams being deferred.

The poem shows us the progression of how his dreams and aspirations were denied and how his reaction evolved. From the poem, we can clearly see that it seemed to worsen to a point of destruction. With this, the readers can follow how his emotions could have changed through time.

Hughes intends to answer the question “ what happens to a dream deferred,” and he was able to do so by giving several responses (Hughes). His first few responses were generally negative, as we’d expect from someone discriminated and denied of their dreams.

He responded that it could dry up like a raisin in the sun. This is a very appropriate response for someone who lost hope, saying that their dreams would all go to waste and just dry up.

A raisin in the sun is once a juicy grape, just like a dream that’s full of promise and hope. By denying that dream, all that would be left is just the wrinkled skin of the past, something very distant to what it previously resembled.

Other responses that Hughes provided include festering like a sore, stinking like a rotten meat, and crusting and sugaring over like a syrupy sweet. These are all undesired, negative situations that could be a gauge of how the author felt when his dream was deferred.

It was uncalled for, it was not the outcome that he expected, but still he must live with that. There isn’t any hint of justice for the author, since these were all irreversible outcomes. At this point, we can now see that aside from disappointment, having one’s dream deferred also causes a great deal of sadness and pain.

In the end, all of the dreams deferred from a man like the author would eventually have to go somewhere. As it piles up, it creates a heavy load which would eventually sag.

All the dreams that they were not able to achieve, all the opportunities that were denied from them would eventually sag and weigh them down. It is such a heavy burden to carry and there is no other way to ease it other than giving them the chance to fulfill those dreams.

Because eventually, as it continues to sag and expand, there would come a point when it would just explode. In the end, they wouldn't be able to sustain such load and so it leads to destruction.

This could be taken both literally and figuratively, because I think that when the load is too heavy to bear, people like Hughes would eventually think of a way to lessen the burden, and it may not be a desirable course of action.

Work Cited:

Hughes, Langston. " A Dream Deferred." Writing through Literature. Eds. Linda Anstendig and David Hicks: Prentice Hall, 1995.