

# American literature

Literature



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Full On Social Equality James Baldwin's *Going to Meet the Man* reflects the hardships the Blacks suffered in their struggles against racism. At the time when the story was published, Black Americans were still fighting the struggles their forefathers have been clamoring for centuries, freedom and equality. Reviewing history, it is noted that the Blacks were sold as slaves and were considered as parts of a person's wealth therefore, they were treated more like animals than human beings. They did not have the freedom to choose to work or play, to be paid salaries that compensate their hard work or to choose what they eat or where they live but their actions were dictated by their masters. Some masters though, could be really be abusive and this usually became the reason for rebellions which result to slaves running away from their masters. As punishments when caught, Black slaves were given harsh treatments like what is pictured in the aforementioned short story. The man that Jesse witnessed to have been punished during his father's time as a sheriff tried to run away after being tortured but he was found and he was given a brutal punishment. He was displayed naked before the people and was burned to death. However, before he was burned, his groin was cut which might have made it more agonizing for the man.

Such brutality is not the only example that the Black slaves have encountered from the Whites. In their fight for their rights, Black people have been laughed at, played treated like roosters in a cockpit. This is portrayed in *Battle Royal* from the novel *Invisible Man*. Here, the narrator tells about his experience when he was invited to deliver again his well-applauded speech during his graduation, to a special group of people. Although he did not feel right about what he said in his speech, bright as he was, he knew just how to

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please his listeners. Since he was well praised for his speech, he expected to be well-treated to where he was invited however; he was still to learn the harsh realities of his being Black. The narrator, with great expectation, anticipated his delivery of his words to be as momentous as his graduation but he was met with an unexpected fight that he had to face. The young Black man was matched with other Black men to fight among themselves for a prize and it was not as simple as a boxing match rather was complicated by the manner they were to get their monetary prizes. After the match, the prizes were scattered on an electrified rug so that whoever dares to get the money would be in real pain. These were all done for the entertainment of the White people present. Although the match was far beyond any civilized man's comprehension, the audience were quite entertained and were even betting for who would win. In addition, the Audiences were mentioned to be of highly recognized professions like bankers, lawyers, judges, doctors, fire chiefs and merchants yet in the presence of the Black fighters, these professionals treated them like they were not human beings. They laughed at their fighting. They also laughed and were entertained when the Black fighters were getting electrocuted trying to get their money.

With such treatments the Black people encountered, it is no wonder why some resort to rebellion. In *Going to Meet the Man*, the black people tried to protect themselves by arming themselves and showing that they are as tough as those who are in authority which made the Whites like Jesse avoid going out at night for fear that he might get killed. Although he had the strong urge to have sex with a nigger, Jesse had to keep himself from going out because he knew that the Blacks are already watching after each other and would not allow danger come near their women. On the other hand,

some resorted to peaceful means like crying for equality through education as the narrator in *Battle Royal* tried to do. With his communication skills, he spoke for his people about social responsibility and social equality. Through all the dangers Black fighters have been through, no one can really fathom the hardships they endured. Nevertheless, with what they have achieved it could be said that all their pains were not in vain.