

A story drawn by
junot diaz



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The story "Drown" sets in the summer time in New Jersey. Diaz and his friend Beto are raging, out of control, in their neighborhood known as the ghetto. They stole, broke windows... pissed on peoples steps and then challenged them to come out and stop us. While Diaz has another year of high school, Beto for college on the other hand is leaving for college at the end of the summer. Diaz has several recurring feelings such as, suffocation, problems defining his masculinity, and being trapped, problem is that Diaz would rather stay trapped in the Ghetto if it means not turning out like Beto.

Why does Diaz use the metaphor drown? Why does Diaz struggle with masculinity? Does Diaz want to come up for air or continue to suffocate? In "Drown" the setting plays a key role in the story. Diaz described his neighborhood as, "The broken apart buildings, little strips of grass, the piles of garbage around the cans, and the dump"(Drown 91). The neighborhood where Diaz live shapes his life, so it plays an important role in the story. Most of Diaz anxiety is caused by the fact that he cannot leave his neighborhood, because he fears the outcome once in the outside world. Another setting that is important is the pool.

The pool is described in a way that is similar to the neighborhood where Diaz live, "The water feels good... while everything above me is loud and bright, everything below is whispers..." this particular quote coincides with the fact that Diaz is trapped, but he'd rather stay below than come up and see the outcome of him leaving for the outside world like Beto. The metaphor suffocation occurs throughout the story and ties to the story title itself. In this story Diaz shows it more at the pool scene, it seem as Diaz move

through the story, but something always draws him back to the pool where most of his drowning occur.

This particular metaphor is used in several parts of the story, for instance, Diaz is suffocating where he lives because of all the poverty, misery, and drugs. Another way the author uses this metaphor is when he talks about how his mother keeps all the windows and doors locked, " Before we head out she drags us through the apartment to make sure the windows are locked... we never open the windows... this place just isn't safe... "(Drown 96), this quote gives the notion that maybe his mother is also suffocating him by keeping all the windows closed at all times trapping the hot air which can also make Diaz think he is suffocating.

Masculinity is something that Diaz struggle with more than anything in this story. In the start Beto and Diaz are both confused about their masculinity, but Beto in a different way because he's really a homosexual. In Diaz neighborhood homosexuality is viewed very negatively. On page 103 in the story, Diaz talks about how his friend Alex will stop by the side of the rode and say, Excuse me. When somebody comes over he'll point his pistol in their face just to see what they'll do, they also call the homosexuals patos throughout the story.

Once Diaz have several sexual encounters with Beto, that's when Diaz starts to question his masculinity. Diaz states, " Mostly i stayed in the basement terrified that i would end up abnormal, a fucking pato"(Drown 104). It is obvious that Beto questioning of their masculinity is not so much like Diaz anymore, because Beto accepts the fact that he is a homosexual by going to college, while Diaz on the other hand is still trapped and confused with his

masculinity. Diaz is maybe afraid to leave for the outside world because that would mean he's accepting that he is also a homosexual like Beto.

In the story Diaz doesn't say it exactly that he wants to do the complete opposite of whatever Beto do, but he gives the reader that feeling. It is possible that Diaz can be satisfied with drowning in his neighborhood, because on page 100 the army recruiter offers Diaz a chance to escape his drowning, but Diaz refuses to come up for air. The author pathos, logos, and ethos plays a role in the story also. Diaz uses some symbols such as the pool and specific words to express himself in a way that makes the story feel more, drawing the reader into his world and his observation from first person point of view.

Throughout the author Junot Diaz moves in and out of his character quotes, which is a good thing because it gives the author a credibility and it communicates that their statements are more than just facts, they're a piece of Diaz memory of a feeling or a specific time. However the only way possible for Diaz to discontinue his suffocation and drowning is by joining the Army, but Diaz is still against and unwilling to come up for air, but uses the fact that he helps his mother as an excuse for not leaving his neighborhood and coming up for air.