

Outcast by claude mckay

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The paper "Outcast by Claude McKay" is a great example of a literature book review.

Characters and their symbolic use: 1. 'my fathers' refers to his forefathers in Africa; it is symbolic of the poet's identification with his native land and his longing to be part of it again; 2. 'the western world' differentiates Africa from the West; but in the context of the poem, it symbolizes the poet's social setting and he is no more able to identify himself with African culture; 3. 'alien gods' symbolically conveys the poet's inability to identify with the west and its culture, though he constantly pays obeisance to these strange gods that rule the western culture; 3. 'white man' refers to the people of the west; the phrase symbolically hints at the racial issues and differences; 4. 'sons of earth' speak of the people around the poet, probably the white people or the people with an identity; he finds himself apart from the rest with a dual identity or no identity;

Suggested Themes: 1. Longing to return to primitive Africa; 2. Hybrid cultural identity- lost between two worlds; 3. Loss of identity.

Citations: 1. (lines 1, 2) express the conflict between the body with the western identity and culture and the soul longing to go back to primitive Africa; it reveals the poet's earnest desire to identify himself with Africa, undisturbed by colonialism; 2. (lines 8-10) show how the poet is enslaved to the western culture and imperialism; his essential identity is lost forever; he finds himself paying homage to the 'alien gods', which by itself is an ironic portrayal of his dual self; the poet finds the gods alien but is bound by them unable to get freedom; 3. (lines 11, 12) the poet yearns to go in search of his primitive African identity shedding his body off and carrying only his spirit; as a ghost, he would roam around unable to identify himself with neither the

west nor Africa, caught between two worlds as a thing apart; body is bound by the western identity.

“The Outcast” is a sonnet by Claude McKay. The poem is an expression of the poet’s longing to get back to the African identity and his realization of its impossibility. He feels alienated and is caught between two worlds. The poet feels the loss of an essential part of his self. His body carries the cultural identity of the west and he has been paying obeisance to the ‘alien gods’ which rule the western culture. His soul yearns to come out of this body and roam back to find its real identity; however, the poem closes with a note of realization of being caught between two worlds and the loss of identity. Here comes the concept of hybrid identity and culture; the poet has adopted the western culture and identity, still unable to identify himself completely with it and finding it impossible to go back to the primitive African identity as well.