

Worksheet: literary analysis



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

1. McKay's idea of expression revolves on fundamental freedom stemming from the recognition that African Americans are human beings and thus they have human dignity. He himself contrasts the African Americans to " hogs hunted and penned" (1-2). His use of words such as " noble" also connotes an idea of strong moral character even in death (5). This implies that African Americans should have an advertence for violence and war in the face of suffering when they express themselves and this is notably supported by the lines " so that precious blood may not be shed in vain" (6-7). Yet this does not mean that they should not defend their own rights. " One deathblow" does not signify physical force, but rather a force that can only come from the unity of African Americans against a common foe (11). This still applies to African Americans today who are still plagued by the social inequality present in our system such as discrimination and public cruelty.

2. Middle Eastern and African rivers have a special place in the historical annals of men: they are cradles of civilization, a source of life, culture and development. This claim is reinforced by lines citing " rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins" (2). There is however, a simile to the depths of the river and the depths of a man's soul, which calls for much interpretation and evaluation (3, 10).

It is actually the history of a person, that is, his or her experiences which provides much deepness to a person's character. Thus, the poem also relates much of the experiences of a collective consciousness of a people with the rivers such as the Euphrates, the Congo, and the Mississippi. These experiences give depth and meaning to a race, such as the African Americans.

3. Tantalus in Greek mythology was a king and a son of Zeus who tried to

test the omniscience of the Gods by boiling his son and serving him in a banquet. When the gods realized the nature of the food, they punished Tantalus by hanging him in a tree in Tartarus, forever hungry and thirsty and tormented by letting him see water and fruit but never allowing him to eat or drink. Sisyphus on the other hand, was another king who god Zeus carry off the beautiful maiden Aegina and told her father what he had witnessed. Zeus punished him by compelling him to roll for eternity from a top of a steep hill and down again. The main idea evoked here is what compels human suffering and the mysterious ways of God to man as cited “ inscrutable His ways are, and immune to catechism by a mind too strewn” (10-11). But in the end he sarcastically points a distinction between the works of God and the work of men towards other men to make them do their own bidding (15).

4. Jook Joints, as defined by the article, are black working-class establishments for eating, drinking, singing and dancing. Jook Joints are the physical culminations of the African American culture, on where songs and dances are openly done and carried out. In short, culture, the animating factor of a society is both given meaning and manifests itself in different art forms such as Jook Joints. African American music as a dramatic art, as Hurston would conclude, cannot be found anywhere else except for its origin, where the masses or the great majority of African Americans take part in its cultivation.

5. I think literature is one of the most indispensable ways of leading a community because it directly influences men’s actions by the mere fact that they are free of ignorance, prejudice or superstition. To have liberty is bound by this prerequisite of using reason and recognizing that humanity needs to

be respected. Finally, literature is a source of liberation from the oppression of the mind which is placed by racial discrimination and bias, without which, people will be free to will their own improvement and push for their own progress and development.