

# The little black boy essay



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William Blake was a fabulous British poet, printmaker, and painter. He composed *Songs of Innocence* in 1789. In this book of nineteen poems, Blake maintains a simplistic style in order to bring the human experience and truth to anyone young and old, or black and white. “The Little Black Boy,” the poem I am analyzing critically, is about an African child who comes to reality and accepts his own blackness. At first, the black boy seemed to accept the supremacy of the English boy.

But the last line states that he has come to an agreement with his self through God and his mom’s guidance, that he has a better chance or is more worthy because of his faith in God. Mr. Blake clearly was writing about the condition of black people using the experience of a little black boy. At the time that William Blake lived, he had to use a great deal of rhetorical devices to express his liberal or progressive social ideas. In order for William Blake or any white person to write about black people in a way that will impact a reader, the white writer must effectively use a variety of rhetorical devices. In this poem, “The Little Black Boy”, William Blake’s use of many rhetorical devices definitely had an impact on me, a young black woman living in the 21st century.

The devices used by Mr. Blake in ‘The Little Black BOY’ that impacted me the most were imagery, symbolism, and metaphor. As a female reader, the authors’ use of imagery immediately impacted me. Beginning with the title of the poem, my mind immediately visualized a little black boy.

My mind thought of the thousands of little black boys that I have interacted with in my life time. I thought of the little black boys in my family. I thought

of a time many years ago when my father was a little black boy and all the challenges that he and others in his generation have had to endure. The author's use of Imagery also was evident in his use of black and white. The mother of the poem bore a black child.

... but his soul is white (L. 2). Thus, the child is born with the negative stigma and challenge of being black, but he is inherently good and decent in the eyes of God because his soul is white or pure.

Given the time of the writing of the poem, William Blake could have been saying to his readers of the time (and reminding them) that the black baby would live a difficult and challenging life just because he is black. Moreover, William Blake could have been saying that even though he as a white person also viewed black babies as being "black" and less than a white person...

the soul of the black baby was still white and pure. The author also uses Imagery to illustrate the power and love of God. The mother explains to her son how God, through the sun...

gives light and heat to everyone and everything: little black boys will go to heaven when they have learned to take the heat of the difficult life here on earth. Symbolism is necessary for any piece of literature; it serves as an emotional short-cut. Without symbols, it is difficult for the reader to relate their own lives to the author's. In this poem the colors of black and white are used over and over again to symbolize bad or foreboding (black) and good, cherry and virtuous (white). The black boy is "as if bereaved of light," nevertheless, his blackness better enables him to bear the light and receive the warmth of God as well (L. 4).

Literally, the blackness acts as a cloud against the sun. The blackness comes out at the end of the poem, “ when I from black and he from white could free” (L. 3) Here, the word “ cloud” is the black skin which protects from the sun, which can also stand for inequality, meaning that black is not of any less importance than white. The sun symbolizes God, as well as the ray of light signifying God’s love.

These symbols enhance the poem in ways that it engages the reader to relate to the symbols probably used in their household or generation. They bring the reader in context with the poem. The sun is a powerful metaphor for God and the fact that the light and heat from the sun is available to everyone and everything, just like the love of God. The sun is used as a constant metaphor for God. The author speaks of the rising sun as a place where God lives.

The sun is bright and cannot be looked at, just like the presence of God. The author also describes the warmth of the sun as being a very pleasant and comforting place to be. The author speaks of “ the beams of love” and “ lambs rejoice” in order to illustrate how the warmth of the sun can cause lambs (humans..

. the lambs of God), to rejoice and take comfort in the love of God (L . 14 & L. 20) Furthermore, through the power of the sun, the author explains that the love of God is everywhere, and like the warmth of the sun, is freely available to everyone, including little black boys. The poem “ The Little Black Boy’ seems to be written by a white person who had a clear understanding of the plight of little black boys who were born into an inherently racist society.

Moreover, William Blake seems to understand the confusion that many white Christians seem to have when they objectively look at life through the eyes of a little black boy. I acknowledge the pathos Blake uses to prompt action to stop racism. His vision is to make the audience think emotionally about his argument and he succeeds.