Name

Professor name

Subject

Date

Writer behind the street

Langston Hughes in “Themes for English B” uses imagery, symbols and figurative language for transmitting the themes of racism and inequality. The poet begins by comparing himself with his teacher by using a rhetoric question in the first stanza. The purpose of incorporating these poetic devices is transmits the complications and miseries encountered by poet. The poem is the representation of racism faced by the narrator when he takes his first English class in college. The central theme of the poem is fear of acceptance as the narrator expresses his worries and uncertainties for receiving appreciation from the teacher. Imagery, symbolism and figurative language allowed Hughes to portray the reality of the black students who are victim of their color.

Hughes employs imagery in the poem by relating it to his college life. By using this tool the poet has allowed the readers to picture the story of the narrator. Imagery is apparent in the lines, “the steps from the hill lead down into Harlem” (Hughes 8). This is a clear depiction of comparrisons drwan between whites and blacks. The line has used imagery which permit readers to connect the story with Harlem, reflecting the dark history of black Americans. The term Harlem makes it easy to interepret the message of Hughes which is focused on reflecting the problems of a young African-American boy. The poem has stressed on the student who is confused and anxious because of his color. Imagery also transmits another message by focusing on the poet. The use of Harlem depicts that the poet had connections to African community who sufferred the consequences of social inequality. Imagery helped the poet to take readers to a situation which represents the past of the narrator.

Hughes strtaegy of using imagery has added more vividness to his poem, making it more meaningful. The poet has taken audience to the time when black people were sttruggling to gain equal rights due to the prrevalence of racial discrimination. Imagery is also used in the lines, “I feel and see and hear, Harlem, I hear you” (Hughes 15). The line exprresses the sadness and tension in the tone of the poet which allow readers to feel him. They can put them in his state and visualise the hardships experienced by the people of Harlem. It was the community of blacks and is always associated with their pains and sufferings. It is thus easy for the people to find the hidden meaning of the poem by linking the story with Harlem’s history.

Figurative language is a prominent poetic device incorpoorated by Hughes for conveying the themes of racial inequality. The poem is the meditation by the speaker which explains the relationship of a black student with his Engliish instructor. Figurative language is used in the poem as Hughes mentions, “I guess being colored doesn’t make me *not* like” (Hughes 23). The line uses figurative language because it help readers to identify the purpose of the poem. The line emphasizes on the word colored which reveals the fear of the narrator (Pineda). He is worried in the English class due to his black color and African background. This allow audience to understand that narrator is the only black guy in the class and is concerned about receiving equal treatment from the teacher. Instead of using simple metaphors, Hughes has managed to portray the reality of blacks by employing figurative language. Figurative language makes it clear that the speaker cite his personal experiences that lead to building sense of self.

Symbolism is a powerful poetic device used by the poet for adding more richness and clarity to the themes of race and inequality. Symbols are incorporated throughout the poem for giving clues to the readers. Symbol is apparent in the poem as the poet mentions, “I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem” (Hughes 2). This clearly portrays speaker as an African who is suffering due to social inequality and injustice. Color symbolizes the tragedy of the black people who lived as secondary citizens in America. This tool has allowed the poet top establish the link between blacks and pains. The themes of racial discrimination haunt the speaker even in the classroom that contain all white boys. Symbolism is also apparent in the poem as it says “you are white yet a part of me, as I am a part of you. That’s American” (Hughes 29-30). In the lines American is used for drawing line between backs and whites. This transmits the feelings of the speaker who sees no difference between two races and is inclined to consider them as Americans (Bingham). Hughes has also used American to symbolize the oppression faced by Africans due to their colors.

The analysis of the poem depicts that appropriate use of the poetic devices have allowed Hughes to build a strong meaning for the readers. Imagery is the prominent tool, which allow poet to create the settings of Harlem, taking readers to the past of blacks when they suffered injustice resulting in their miseries and tragedy. Figurative language has added more clarity to the poem by focusing on the themes of race and inequality. Symbolism has been used constantly for adding clues that leads to the period when Africans suffered injustices in Harlem.

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