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Broken Dreams

Literature holds significant importance in bringing revolutions and motivating people I the history of the United States of America. The poems discussed in this comparative analysis are Still I Rise which is a work of Maya Angelou, and Harlem written by Langston Hughes. Both poems hold significant importance in the history of USA as they indirectly highlight the struggles and hardships from which the African Americans went through in the past.

Maya Angelou apart from being a poet also holds the title of being a famous author, historian, songwriter, producer, singer, civil rights activist, dancer and performer as well. Her work was appreciated by the people as it highlighted the problems faced by the people. Maya’s work I know Why the Caged Bird Sings was nominated for the National Book Award, while the Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize as well which is considered as the most honorable and prestigious price of all time. Apart from this, she was the coordinator of the North for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. She holds the honor of being the first woman director in the history of Hollywood. In this poem, she depicts her life that how she kept herself firm to pass all the hurdles that came in her path.

On the other hand, the poet Langston Hughes was also a social activist, novelist, playwright and communist. He is considered as the founder of the new literary art form known as Jazz Poetry. Langston is known for his contribution as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance in New York City. His major work is on the brutal and racial behaviors from which the African Americans went throughout in the history. His poem Harlem is based on the Harlem Renaissance, a significant event from the history of America. Many famous people from history used their work in the field of literature to aware the Africans.

Along with Langston other people from the field of literature and music wrote to motivate the blacks to stand up for their rights. Hughes was a famous leader of his time due to his behavior towards the white Americans, as they used to fear from him. He used to keep a strict and aggressive behavior in front of others, as he had a perception that he falls down, it's an end. He knew that many hopes are associated with him and if he falls down, many hopes will end and the people will continue to live in slavery. They will compromise with their current situation and will never respond back, the dream will stay as a dream forever. He started the first prominent movement named as the Back to Africa Movement under the umbrella of his organization known as the U.N.I.A. the main purpose of this organization was to collect funds so that they can afford ships to start the migration of Africans back to Africa.

Langston as being the father of Black Nationalism worldwide depicted his aggressive attitude in his work which differs him from all other leaders of his era. His frustration is reflected in the verses. The poem begins with a series of questions that provokes the reader; his verses are revolving around a deferred dream. He uses dream in his verses because at that time the African Americans were living a life similar to slavery. They were treated as inferiors by the white Americans and living a life of equality was a dream for them. He relates this dream with different outcomes and results of disappointment. He mainly conveys the message of inequality and aspects related to it like racial disparities and restrained opportunities which exist for the Afro Africans in the American society. He portrays his aggressiveness along with the feeling of deprivation from which the blacks suffer from throughout their life. He links his idea of dream with a dried raisin to show the level of being left out and useless. He refers to how a raisin dries and become useless if not harvested on time, similar to that the dream of equality will die and stay a wish they don't make an effort for it. In the second question, the poet refers the dream with a feasting sore to depict the ongoing brutal racial disparities and acts of inequalities happening around his community.

According to him fulfilling this dream under such painful life is extremely difficult and near to impossible for his people. Then he links this dream with something, even more, worse, he compares this dream with rotten meat. According to the poet, the meat looks very tempting and nice when it's fresh but looks like a waste once rotted. The dream and motivation to fulfill this dream are rotten now, which means that the people are not motivated to achieve this dream. The fourth query from the poet discusses the dream with sweet candy, he says the dream is similar to the candy which looks delicious to eat but after some time the desire to eat that candy slowly decreases then ends. Exactly like candy, the dream is slowly losing its importance and significance in the eyes of the people due to being hopeless.

After putting it through different levels of hopelessness and unworthiness the poet relates the dream with a heavy load. He says that people are or might be under the pressure to fulfill this dream, which is unbearable for them. He says that people are getting used to the life of inequality and they are not making efforts from their own end to achieve this dream. However, in this ending verse of this poem, the poet leaves a statement of hope for the people. He conveys the message that the dream may look like a desire but it will be fulfilled one day. He gives high hopes and urges the people to speak and stand against the barbaric behavior of the whites. He wants his people to stand against the racial disparities happening with them and motivates them to build their strength in order to change their way of living. The poem of a set of various elements of literature, the poet used an aggressive tone along with firm descriptions. He helped the reader in depicting understanding the importance of his thoughts through his verses.

In comparison to this, the poem Still I Rise by Maya Angelou is written with a tone of motivation. She depicts motivation through her verses instead of aggression and tries to engage the reader with positivity. This poem conveys a stimulating combination of tones to keep the reader engaged in her poem. In some verses of the poem she may sound fun-filled and reluctant, sometimes she portrays anger, bitterness and self-assurance. However, the main tone that reflects her behavior and according to the title it's conquering.

She starts the poem by addressing all the readers and the verses are not a reflection. Similar to Langston this poem also addresses the oppression of white Americans on the Africans. She reflects the motivation and urges to speak up against not only for her people but also for the ancestors of the African community. It targets the political as well as the dominance of the whites. She stood against the series of incidents under the umbrella of oppression and inequality from centuries. Some people might get a feeling of sympathy from her verses as she speaks to reject the upcoming events of oppression. She stresses and emphasizes the fact that how the wrong type of literature can lead to imprisoning the mentality of the oppressor and the victim as well. She tries to target the mentality of the oppressors first instead of addressing her own people.

In the verses of the poem the poet states that people can alter history according to their own perception. She says that due to the oppression and hatred of the whites the blacks might be depicted with false allegations by them. She challenges the Americans that no matter if they push her down on the ground and oppress her with their dominance, but she will stand again despite being pushed down multiple times. She refers to herself with the dust particles that no matter if you through me way in the dust I will rise again like the small particles of the dust in the air. She catches the attention of the reader by depicting her behavior as being sassy and sexually attractive. She depicts that women are always treated with physical violence and oppression, specifically the ones who belong to the African community. In the next verse, she refers herself to the moon and the sun. According to Maya, similar to the process of the sun rising and setting, she says that no matter how many times she is thrown or set down by the dominant power, she will rise and stand up again with the same courage and bravery.

She refers to her courage with the tides of an ocean, no matter how many times they get low, still they form again with force and pressure. She depicts anger and taunts the oppressor by saying that the whites might want to see her compromise with the way of living they have chosen for her. She says that they might have the desire to see her as a slave with head bowed, voice down and eyes lowered in their presence with shoulders dropped like they don't exist. Due to her firm courage and bravery, she says that the thought of making me a slave will never fulfill and she will never lose her hope or fall down in front of them.

She ends the poem by saying that the whites can kill her and make her fall or make her suffer from their oppressive and destructive behavior but its useless. She refers her freedom and speech to the air which can never be captured and says that similar to this free air she will never get bound by them. She is ready to face death but not ready to accept the life of slavery and hopelessness as most people did at her time. Overall, in her whole verses, she is in contact with both the oppressor and the victim. She is trying to motivate her people by conveying that they should not get used to the life of racism, slavery and inequality. The African community is equally talented and honorable to receive equal rights and that they should be treated not only with equality but with equity as well. Maya Angelou wrote many poems and other pieces of literature according to and in her, each and every piece her main moral was to motivate the people to speak up for themselves. Her work is considered as revolutionary in the field of literature.

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