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8/31/30

INTD-100

Notes of a Native Son: Summer Reading Assignment

1. Within James Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son*, he explains how his father passed away. Baldwin goes into detail about his father's bitter personality, and how this affected his life. After his father's death, he was working in New Jersey, and faced racism that he hadn't experienced in his life. These experiences lead up to a day when he enters a restaurant with an abundance of built up anger. He throws a mug of water at a waitress which caused people in the restaurant to become violent towards him. Upon reflecting how his father had acted he realizes that the real danger in his life was not from the discrimination he faced, but the hate he had inside of him.
2. James Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son* shows that after his father's death, Baldwin realizes how he influenced his life.
3. In part III of James Baldwin's essay, he talks about his father's funeral. He describes a "poison" that affected his father, and that was present in their lives. The "poison" he is referring to is the act of racism and discrimination towards people of color. "It was the Lord who knew of the impossibility every parent in that room faced: how to prepare the child for the day when the child would be despised"(107). Within this quote, he talks about how only the Lord could really see what people were going through, and how difficult it was knowing that a child of color was growing up in a world where they would be discriminated against. The "cure" to this poison that Baldwin mentions is speculation on what this antidote would be, if there even was one. He gives examples of how the streets and public places, as well as the prisons and morgues of Harlem prove that such a poison exists, and questions the reliability of an antidote. "...testified to the potency of the poison while remaining silent as to the efficacy of whatever antidote, irresistibly raising the question of whether or not such an antidote existed"(107). He also explains that the antidote could not be wanted but instead to fight hate with more hate.
4. Within James Baldwin's essay *Notes of a Native Son*, he describes the night of his father's funeral where a black soldier and a white policeman fought over a black girl in the entrance to the Hotel Braddock. Baldwin's stance on evidence and facts that arise during this part of the story connect with the population's tendency to exacerbate and

manipulate the facts of an incident in order for the details to work out better for them. Baldwin expresses that the facts of the story did not matter to the people in the neighborhood. They falsified the details of the shooting to make it be fatal when it was not so. This intensification of the actual story did however give them reason to riot. If the story were believed by the public as it actually were, there would not be a strong enough cause in order for these people to riot. Because the story turned into murder, the incentive was therefore strong enough to create the effect that it did. Baldwin explains how the heightened version of the story caused the riots, and he also explained how the riots did nothing to solve the underlying problem of racism. He explains "It would have been better, but it would also have been intolerable, for Harlem had needed something to smash"(112). This means that even though the riots were not blatantly successful, they were still necessary to feed the rage of the citizens in Harlem.