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Summer Reading Assignment for INTD100: Coffee and Black Holes

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1. *This essay is in a narrative style, and is broken into several parts. Summarize part I in one paragraph, using 120 words or fewer. Note: The purpose of this exercise is to complete the summary in no more than a certain number of words. What key moments stand out in your mind? What is the central realization of the author at the end of the section?*
 - a. Part I of the essay describes factors of author James Baldwin's life that influenced his views while growing up in Harlem in the mid-20th century. He begins the essay by explaining his relationship with his deceased father. It is made clear that the author was not close with his father, and he describes his father's bad temper. Baldwin also mentions that his father would often joke about the family's poverty. Next, Baldwin explains a relationship his family had with a white school teacher who helped his family. Then the author tells of the segregation he faced while working in New Jersey. Lastly, Part I is concluded by the author explaining the anger he had inside from the segregation he faced.
2. *Repeat exercise 1, but instead use only twenty words. What happens in part I of the essay?*
 - a. This essay describes the author's struggle with racism, poverty, and family in Harlem and New Jersey in the mid 1900's.
3. *Consider part III. Construct a tract of writing that a) defines and explains the poison metaphor the author describes at the funeral of his father, b) identifies the author's "cure" or cures for the poison, and c) provides several pieces of supporting evidence for the identification of the author's cure.*
 - a. While Baldwin was growing up he always thought his father was an irrational, angry man, but after experiencing segregation himself for the first time later in life, he realized that his father's condition was caused by "the poison". Poison is a metaphor for discrimination. Baldwin compares his father's real illness to the psychological illness caused by the everyday discrimination that African Americans face. The poison can be found everywhere one goes. For example Baldwin states that it can be found in "the avenues, side streets, bars, billiard halls, hospitals, police stations, playgrounds... houses of correction, the jails, and the morgue". The poison is inescapable, and according to Baldwin no antidote is strong enough to defeat it. He even states that all this raises the question of "whether or not such an antidote existed". Baldwin even says that the lord even knows that it is impossible for a parent to prepare their child to face the "poison" as they know that it will eventually overtake them like it did to themselves. As he analyzes this at his father's funeral he realizes that his father's flaws were not entirely his fault, and he begins to forgive him for the flaws he misunderstood as a child. It also becomes known that Baldwin feels that he has an antidote to fight

the poison. His writing ability was his antidote, and he feels it is strong enough to defeat this poison that he will face for the remainder of his existence.

4. *Consider the final part of the essay, when the author describes the fight in the Hotel Braddock. Write a tract of between 200-400 words on the author's treatment of evidence and facts. What does the author have to say about the importance of facts about the fight to the people in that neighborhood? Notice the author's writing takes on the tone of a reporter regarding the ensuing riot. What facts stand out regarding the outcome?*
 - a. As part III of the essay continues the author explains how he celebrated his birthday after enduring his father's funeral earlier the same day. He was at the Hotel Braddock when he noticed a fight occurring between an African American soldier and a white police officer. The dispute was over an African American woman, and according to the author this was not an uncommon event. The fight led to the soldier being shot by the officer, and later rumors spread that the soldier was fatally shot in the back while defending the girl. Baldwin then exclaims that neither of those pieces of information are accurate statements, but "no one was interested in the facts." He says people preferred the rumors because although they are false, they provide the people with what they want to hear. After he describes his feelings on evidence and facts he then takes the tone of a reporter and describes the riot that followed the fight. He reports that the mob spread in every direction, but never crossed the ghetto lines. This is an important statement because it shows that although the rioters are outraged they know that if they leave Harlem there will be consequences. Therefore, instead of going after white neighborhoods the rioters chose to attack white businesses inside of Harlem. Baldwin also points out that if those businesses had been open when they raided them, there would have been a much bloodier outcome. As he views the damage that had been done to the establishments of Harlem he realizes the amount of wealth in Harlem, and although what the rioters did is wasteful, he understands.
5. *Bonus points: Read the essay "The Harlem Ghetto" from earlier in the book. How do the details in this essay corroborate the sentiments of the characters in the first essay? This item can be any number of words.*
 - a. After reading and analyzing the essay "The Harlem Ghetto" I came to realize some details that corroborate the sentiments of the characters in the first essay. I felt the most important detail came at the end of the essay when Baldwin refers to the "poison" in his first essay in a different way. Near the end of the essay Baldwin talks about how African American children face the darkness of discrimination everywhere, and like his father, eventually "the cancer attacks the mind and warps it". This detail caught my eye because I realized that Baldwin was using a new metaphor in this essay to describe the same issue. For me, this corroborates the sentiments of the first essay because it shows that this "poison" or "cancer" will continue to affect every African American child until a strong

enough antidote is discovered for each of them to overcome the discrimination of their everyday lives.