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Summer Reading Assignment For INTD 100: Coffee and Black Holes

August 31, 2020

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?*
  - This essay describes the life of a teenage african american boy in Harlem during the 1940's. It begins with the passing of his father, which leads to him reflecting on their distant relationship. The author writes about relationships with white people and while growing up his teacher helped him further his education. The author then gets a job in New Jersey where people are not as accepting, he was terrorized because of his skin color while working. He was refused service at restaurants and others harassed him for being on the streets. Eventually, this led to a build up of hatred and he tried to force his way into a restaurant before causing a scene and almost getting himself killed.
2. *Repeat exercise 1, but instead use only twenty words. What happens in part I of the essay?*
  - The author endures life in Harlem in the 1940's as an African American, including poverty, discrimination, loss and intrnal stuggles.
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.*
  - While the author is attending the funeral of his father he starts to reflect on the life his father lived and the difficulties that followed him. As the preacher reads his fathers' eulogy, the author feels like his father is being forgiven for his wrongdoings and the struggles that plagued him. He knows that God saw who his father really was, he saw through the troubles and saw who he really was. The metaphor used helps the author understand why his father was so hard on him growing up, he was trying to prepare him for the "day when the child would be despised" (Baldwin 107). He understood that he was raised in a poisonous environment so as he grew older and had to face racism and segregation they would be better prepared to deal with it. While most poisons have a cure, the author

believes that “poison should be fought with poison” and that maybe “an antidote (is not) desirable” (Baldwin 108). Throughout the author’s descriptions of his father it’s understood how harshly he was raised and while that might affect his image of his father, it will also affect his ability to survive the tough life he will continue to endure. He decides that if this cure were to take away everything that keeps him alive today then it might not be worth it. Although he also understands that a cure might definitely help his ability to live, which also explains his writing, The author channels everything he goes through into his journaling. All of the emotions, the good and the bad, it gives him a place to remember what happened and how it affected him. Within the essay we see the author’s desire to withstand the troubles and poison he goes through just as he did when he was raised, but unlike his father he has a ‘cure’ or a way to cope with the insanity he has lived through and will continue to live through.

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?*

- The author appears to document this fight like a true reporter, he states the facts, exactly what he knows happened and then describes what the people will believe happened, which is very different. To the author the facts are important because they tell the story of what happened and what should ensue afterwards but the people of Harlem feel differently, they take what happens and mold it into what fits them and how they want to feel. The author wrote that “the facts were somewhat different...but no one was interested in the facts. They preferred the invention because this invention expressed and corroborated their hates and fears so perfectly” (Baldwin 111). He was there to witness the fight as were many others involved in the riot but they chose the narrative they wanted to follow, which was based on anger and outrage that had been building up within them. A fact that the author wrote that really stood out was when he wrote about the riot and how they were targeting white owned businesses and not just to loot them, built to destroy them as well. He wrote that “harlem needed something to smash” (Baldwin 112), meaning they needed to convey the hate they felt for white people for what they had done to them. While walking through the streets he realizes that “none of this was doing anybody any good. It would have been better to have left the plate glass

as it had been and the goods lying in the stores" (Baldwin 112). And while it might have been better to leave harlem how it was, "it also would have been intolerable" (Baldwin 112). These people have gone through hell and back while just trying to live their lives. The author realizes this and understands why they feel what they do because he was raised similar to them, raised to be compliant and keep quiet and not let things get to them but eventually that comes to an end and they have to fight back.