

Item 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?

In the essay we learn that James Baldwin's father died of tuberculosis on the 29th of July in 1943, the same date that Baldwin turned 19 and his last brother was born. Baldwin's father was the first generation of free men, born in New Orleans, and did not allow his children to listen to Louis Armstrong. It is also noted that Baldwin described his father as "the most bitter man he had ever met." Near the end of the first section, Baldwin realizes that he has taken on the same hatred that his father had and it almost intices him to commit murder at a diner.

Item 2: Repeat exercise 1, but instead use only twenty words. What happens in part I of the essay?

The essay describes the hardships and discrimination that Baldwin and his father experienced in New Orleans and New Jersey.

Item 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.

Baldwin previously only experienced discrimination one year prior to his father's death, but after his father's death Baldwin began to experience the bitterness that stews from discrimination more regularly. He mentions that the disease of his father's mind, which is caused by discrimination allowed the disease of his body to destroy him. Growing up Baldwin mentioned that he did not have a close relationship with his father because of his bitterness and anger towards others. After the death of his father, Baldwin begins to understand his father's "bitterness" and metaphorically describes it as a poison. At the funeral of his father Baldwin notes how the preacher forgave his father's sins and described him in an honorable way. However, Baldwin also makes sure to point out how his parents raised him and his siblings in a way that would infect them with the same poison that affected his father. The author suggests that there is a cure for the poison but does not mention it directly, instead he mentions that the entirety of Harlem, "...hospitals, playgrounds, houses of correction, jail houses, and the morgue - testified to the potency of the poison while remaining silent as to the efficacy of whatever antidote, irresistibly raising the question as to whether or not such an antidote existed..." Later in the essay Baldwin explains that the most important moral struggle is within one's own heart, and not against other external forces. Baldwin conveys through his tone in the essay that his choice of antidote for himself is writing. He believes that although injustice is inevitable,

everyone should fight against racial discrimination and do what is right. For Baldwin, his tool for his fight against racial discrimination is the ability to write.

Item 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?

In part III of the essay, Baldwin is reflecting on his 19th birthday after his father's funeral. He was in New York City during the 1940's and described the scene with soldiers and officers scattered about the lobby of the Hotel Braddock. In the lobby of the hotel, an African American soldier and a White police officer argue about an African American woman, and eventually the soldier is shot by the officer and this news spreads like wildfire to the streets. However, the truth doesn't get out, instead rumors that the soldier was shot in the back defending the woman spread. The rumors and the facts were far from the truth. People like to believe more in rumors and legends than the truth if the truth is not what they expect. Therefore, Harlem broke out into riots against what they believed was the enemy-- white-owned businesses. It's mentioned that there would have been a lot more bloodshed if the shops had been open, luckily they were closed and no one was inside. Baldwin also mentions that the looting was done with haste and not efficiency, which clears up that the riots were out of anger over something that was misconstrued.

Baldwin believes that Harlem was in a time of anger and in which they believed they needed something to smash. However, this is false, it would have been much better if none of the stores were smashed and the riots happened peacefully. Rumors about race related issues do not sit well with people, therefore when the people of Harlem heard news of what they thought was a race related issue and death, they decided to fight fire with fire and riot. The people of Harlem believed that they were helping out the issue when in actuality they were making the issue worse because they were being fed false information, the whole situation could have been avoided if the truth was spread instead of the false rumors.