

First and foremost, I must say that the portrayal of Nya Joseph's character was immaculate. Having to demonstrate the love and care a responsible mother has for her children, Karen Pittman did a near-perfect job. Regardless of my feelings about her portrayal, the plot was set on a different topic. This play showed the figurative "pipeline" that most African-American students go through. A system in which students barely finish their high-school education, focusing on the ongoing fights between each other that ultimately impair their future. We see not only this when Omari fought his teacher but with the students that Laurie had to stop from killing each other. Teachers have to stop this type of behavior every day and I understand how challenging this must be. Nonetheless, I believe the whole foundation of the concept, and this play for that matter, was in the hospital scene(scene 9). Omari was talking to his father who explained how his absence followed him constantly. I mean, his father was there in the flesh but not in the soul as Omari stated himself. He later talked about how other kids in his school also have no fathers and think that the missing key to the puzzle is that, and I believe that it is perfectly true. Sure, they did not have a present dad but Omari did, but up to what degree? What I am trying to express is that system that they are in is obviously not helpful, but the deterministic factor as to whether they will be part of the pipeline or not is within the fathers' presence. Most have mothers but, it is within that father figure to helps them reach a healthy and happy life. Being a parent is one of the most difficult jobs there could probably be out there, but it is a necessity for the child. It is sad how we observe Omari be a victim of this cycle; where the father abandons the mother and it is up to the kid to look for a father figure. What is even worse was watching how Xavier also could not be there for him, not because Omari did not want him there, but because he did not know and was afraid to be there for him. Weirdly enough, I do not blame him, because like stated previously, this is a cycle that repeats itself and it most likely

happened to Xavier too. He tried to break out of it by becoming successful and providing for the family, more than what most parents do, but he was not ready to be there yet and did not know how. It is only when we show up and be there that we break the cycle and actually become the better people we are trying to be.

Regarding this play's similarities to Realism, we have to first describe the most important criteria for it to be considered a part of this literary movement. Firstly, there must be a faithful representation of reality, then a plausible setting and characters that live in this environment; finally there must exist a certain focus on the social and political issues at hand. Looking back at the play, it matches perfectly the three criteria. It takes place in an inner city in America, and the characters, such as Nya and Omari, felt like an ordinary relationship between a mother and a teen, with natural conversations; the same goes for the other characters. Finally, it addresses perfectly the "pipeline" system that many people are facing in society nowadays which is a very important issue at hand. Overall, we must say that the play does follow this realistic nature and could be considered a part of this literary genre.

Of course, there are some instances in which the dialogue between the characters seemed somehow dramatic, but what is the point of theatre without drama? It is necessary for the play to take this path in order to hook in the audience and maintain them hooked towards the story. Just as there were some parts where the interactions between the characters were dramatic, there were some comedic moments as well. The jokes are also part of a natural conversation (obviously), but some seemed farfetched. I did laugh at every single joke, but they felt out of place. I believe this was done to relieve the pressure from the audience who were taking in all of the suspense between the scenes, and it was done in a beautiful manner. Maybe the movements of the actors

and actresses were a bit dramatic as well but that also is included in my previous statement. That being the case, as an amateur myself, I couldn't see any other unrealistic moments as well.

Lastly, I would like to describe the actions of Nya. I just found her to be such an interesting character throughout the whole story. Of course, she was completely devoted to her son and proves it in every single scene she is in. She wants her son to break out of the cycle, to be truly free from the burden of others, but in trying to control him she seems to be pushing him away slowly. Thankfully Omari listens and understands the sacrifices his mom put herself through so that he could have the support he was lacking from his father. It was hard for her to be both parents at the same time when in reality just her love was more than enough for him. The importance of the father figure in a child's life is superlative, yet we are blind to see what is in front of us. We forget to be grateful for what we have, for who we have. It is important to show respect to the people we love and love to the people we respect. Xavier said that Omari did not have to love him but he had to respect him, but he could not be further away from the truth. When Omari told him he hated him, he did not mean it; you could see in his eyes, that he was trying to scream the fact that he loved his father but was mad at him for not being there. All in all, it was Nya who had to hold the burdens of them both together and that is why think she was so interesting throughout the play.