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Answer the following discussion questions for “THEME FOR ENGLISH B” by L. Hughes.

1. What conditions does the instructor give to ensure that it will be true, and why those conditions?

The instructor described in the poem says “Go home and write a page tonight. And let that page come out of you – then, it will be true.” The instructor is telling the students to be at home when writing and to make sure what they are writing is fully their own and comes from their heart. This is in order for what they write to be about what they truly believe in, which will allow for what they write to automatically be true, because it will be the subjective version of each person’s unique truth.

1. What is the purpose of the assignment the instructor gives him?

The purpose of the assignment is for the student to be vulnerable and open when writing their page. When they are completely open and honest to the thoughts and emotions they carry inside, they are able to write something that has true meaning and value, because it will automatically be important and relevant for them. By doing this they will be able to showcase their raw talent and opinions to the instructor.

1. Why does the narrator respond to the assignment by thinking of differences?

The author of this poem is Langston Hughes, a black man who, during the time of writing this piece, was studying in a predominately white university during the early 1920’s. His perspective during the time was of being the only black person in his entire class. With the assignment being about being true to yourself, Hughes mentions one very stark characteristic that sets him apart from everyone else, which is the color of his skin. This is due to how a lack of diversity and feeling different from the rest of your peers is an experience that is very relevant and important to him and his identity.

1. What kinds of differences matter most to the narrator?

The narrator begins with mentioning the key characteristics of himself, namely his age, his place of birth, and most importantly, his identity as a black person. He then goes on to talk about where he lives, his home, and the different things he enjoys doing and likes. This differentiates him from everyone else on a more individual and personal level. He then goes on to delve into the topic of how different he is from the rest of the people in the classroom but ends the poem with how he believes that although they are different, they are still a part of each other. They are all American and the differences that can be seen on the surface don’t really matter.

1. What separates the narrator from his fellow classmates and his instructor?

The narrator describes being mostly separated due to their difference in skin color, which at the time, was a very relevant distinction that brings with it two very different life experiences. In the poem, he states “although you're older---and white--- and somewhat more free.” which makes reference to the life of segregation and Jim crow that black people experience in comparison to white people.

1. Does an instructor need to know about a student to be able to teach him or her? What should be known?

All an instructor really needs to know about the student is that they are a human deserving of respect, regardless of physical differences. Instructors should be able to teach anyone and everyone because it is a job that doesn’t require deep personal connection. Personal connections can obviously be made later on, once the instructor has been teaching the student for some time.

1. How do differences affect our connections to others?

With people who are fully accepting of everyone no matter what, differences that are on the surface will not have an effect on making connections. Instead, connection happens if people have compatible personalities and like each other based on that. People are able to make connections if the personality they have, which is different than everybody else, is one that bonds with the other person. For those that are more intolerant a difference in skin tone or culture can cause prejudice or hate toward the other person, which will hinder any personal connection.

1. Discuss two details about the author from the recording at the link included here that surprised you: <https://ndla.no/en/node/16612?fag=42> Be specific and explain clearly *why* you were surprised.

The first detail that surprised me was his father being a racist and hateful toward black people, as a black person himself. It was a surprise that even with a father who had no pride in his identity as a black person, Langston Hughes was still very vocal about his African American heritage, basing most of his work on celebrating black culture and liberation. Another surprising detail was how, when visiting Africa, Africans didn’t think he was a black person but actually white. This was very ironic considering how he is considered back in the US, and how he would never be seen as white.

1. Find information about the Harlem Renaissance and include two specific details here:
   * The Harlem Renaissance developed from the New Negro movement that began in the earth 1900’s and had its foundations in the Great Migration of African Americans from the south to the more urban areas of the north, increasing literacy rates, as well as a developing race pride.
   * Alain Locke, an educator, writer, and philosopher is considered to be the leader of the Harlem Renaissance movement. He graduated from Harvard university and was the first black Rhodes scholar to study in Oxford. He taught at Howard University in Washington D.C. for 40 years.