**Theme For English B -**Literature Notes

**Please note that the information given on this poem is not meant to replace any material given in the classroom setting. It is a very BASIC giude to enable a literal understanding of the poem. Metaphorical interpretations should be sought in the classroom.**

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| **The physical structure of this poem has been altered from the original layout in the text.**    The instructor said,          *Go home and write* *a page tonight.* *And let that page come out of you -* *Then it will be true.*  1.I wonder if it's that simple? I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem.  3.I went to school there, then Durham, then here to this college on the hill above Harlem. I am the only colored student in the class. The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem, through a park, then I cross St. Nicholas, Eighth Avenue, Seventh, and I come to the Y, the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator up to my room, sit down, and write this page:  It's not easy to know what is true for you or me  at twenty-two, my age. But I guess I'm what I feel and see and hear, Harlem, 2.I hear you: hear you, hear me - we too - you, me, talk on this page. (I hear New York, too.) 1.Me - who?  Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love. I like to work, read, learn, and understand life. I like a pipe for a Christmas present, or records - Bessie, bop, or Bach. I guess being colored doesn't make me *not* like the same things other folks like who are other races.  1.So will my page be colored that I write? Being me, it will not be white. 4.But it will be a part of you, instructor. You are white - yet a part of me, as I am a part of you. That's American. Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me. Nor do I often want to be a part of you. But we are, that's true! 5.As I learn from you, I guess you learn from me - although you're older - and white -  and somewhat more free.  This is my page for English B.  Hughs, L. 'Theme For English B' in A World of Prose. Edited by Mark McWatt and Hazel Simmonds McDonald. Pearson Education Ltd, 2005. | **This is the OPINION of one individual, which might not coincide with the views of others.**  LITERAL MEANING The persona's lecturer gave him an assignment to write a page that reflects 'him', or who he is. The persona wonders if this is a simple task, and begins to think about his life. Things like his age, place of birth, race and place of residence. Based on these musings, he surmises that he is confused due to his youth. He guesses that he is what he feels, sees and hears, which is Harlem, New York. He continues his musing about what he likes, and concludes that he likes the same things that people of other races do. On this basis, he questions whether or not his page will be influenced by race. He concludes that it will not be white. He admits that his instructor, as well as the fact that this instructor is white, will have some influence on his page. He states that they both influence each other, that is what being American is about. He believes that both of them might not want to influence each other, but it cannot be helped. He concludes that both of them will learn from each other, despite the fact that the instructor has the double advantage of being older, white and more free. All of these musings and conclusions become his page for English B.  Picture  LITERARY DEVICES  1.RHETORICAL QUESTION   * Stanza 2, line 6: The persona ponders the ease of what he is asked to do. This question, in turn, actually highlights the difficult nature of the task. * Stanza 3, line24: This question highlights the persona's confusion as to who he is. He is unsure. * Stanza 4, line 32: The persona is wondering whether his race will affect  what he writes on the page, despite the fact that he concludes that race does not hinder people, in general, liking the same things. |

2. REPETITION  
This repetition emphasizes the profound impact that Harlem, New York, has had on the personality of the persona.   
  
IMPORTANT WORDS/ PHRASES  
4.'But it will be a part of you, instructor. You are white - yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.That's American.'   
This statement reveals the fact that America is viewed as a melting pot by the persona. He believes that different races and cultures influence each other, thereby forming the term 'American'  
5.As I learn from you, I guess you learn from me - although you're older - and white - and somewhat more free.  
This statement, by the persona, repeats his belief that the American society is a melting pot. It also, however, states that not every-one is equal within this society.  
  
\* It is interesting to note that the persona's 'page for English B' becomes a journey of self discovery that actually does not end. He forms no conclusion as to who he is because his personality is still 'in process'   
  
MOOD/ ATMOSPHEREThe [mood](http://www.bulbsoup.com/ln-comprehension.html) of the poem is reflective.  
  
TONE  
The [tone](http://www.bulbsoup.com/ln-comprehension.html) of the poem is also reflective.