

Module 10: Conflicting Ideologies

Topic 2 Content: Poetry Analysis

Introduction

Poetry Analysis

"From the Dark Tower"

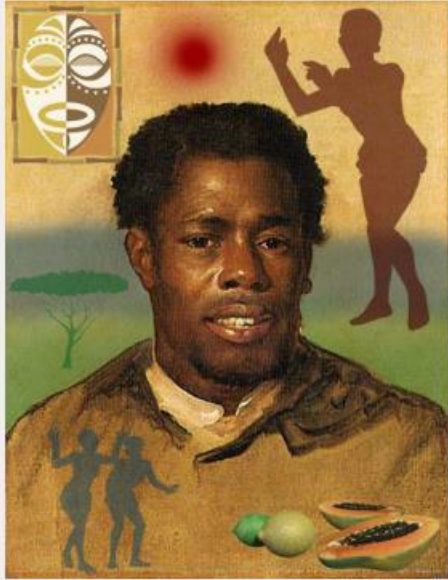
"The Negro Speaks of Rivers"

"Dream Variations"

"The Tropics in New York"

Introduction

Take a moment now to review four poems from the Harlem Renaissance. Click on each of the tabs to examine the poems in further detail.



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"From the Dark Tower"

Poetry Analysis

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"From the Dark Tower" by Countee Cullen is a simple treatise on how African-Americans will not always be mistreated and that race is not indicative of success or failure. More specifically, it does refer to a location at which several poets wrote poetry in Harlem. Note the use of figurative language and sound devices:

- Imagery: planting and reaping; "bursting fruit"; "no less lovely being dark"; "crumple, piteous and fall"; "agonizing seeds"
- Personification: "night whose sable breast"; "heart that bleeds"
- Alliteration and consonance: "Shall we beguile their limbs with mellow flute" and "The night whose sable breast relieves the stark"
- Assonance: "We shall not always plant while others reap"
- Uses exact and slant (inexact) rhyme
- Symbol: planting and harvesting seed

"The Negro Speaks of Rivers"

"Dream Variations"

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"The Negro Speaks of Rivers"

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"The Negro Speaks of Rivers"

"The Negro Speaks of Rivers" was one of Langston Hughes's first poems, and in it the speaker describes three African rivers. It is assumed that the speaker is of African descent and is pulling images from his or her heritage with images of the near present by referencing Lincoln and the Mississippi. The piece shows the importance of heritage, family, and tradition and how the speaker feels strong and soulful because of these images. Note the use of figurative language and sound devices:

- Simile: "rivers ancient as the world"
- Metaphor: rivers and human veins
- Personification: "My soul has grown"; "dawns were young"
- Imagery: "lulled me to sleep"; "raised the pyramids above"
- Repetition: use of the word "rivers"
- Consonance: "built my hut near the Congo and it..."

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"Dream Variations"

Poetry Analysis

- "From the Dark Tower"
- "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"
- "Dream Variations"
- "The Tropics in New York"

"Dream Variations"

"Dream Variations" by Langston Hughes is a poem full of action. The speaker dreams of playing in the sunshine and resting at night but also infers that he or she cannot do those things. Simultaneously, the speaker yearns for a world where the dark skin of an African-American is accepted and regrets that they cannot revel in those things because of their dark skin. Note the use of figurative language and sound devices:

- Imagery: "to whirl and to dance"; "rest at cool evening"; "tall, slim tree"
- Personification: "night comes on gently"; "night come tenderly"
- Repetition: "fling my arms wide"; "like me"; "dance"; "whirl"

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"The Tropics in New York"

Poetry Analysis

- "From the Dark Tower"
- "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"
- "Dream Variations"

"The Tropics in New York"

"The Tropics in New York" by Claude McKay is about the speaker yearning for orchards, fruit trees, and blue skies. The title lets the reader know that this poem takes place in New York so that what is envisioned by the poet is only in his or her mind. The speaker's homeland is seen by the speaker as beautiful and serene; it is a place he or she misses deeply in the city environs. Note the use of figurative language and sound devices:

- Imagery: "ripe and green"; "dewy dawns"; "wave of longing"
- Personification: "low-singing rills"
- Simile: "nun-like hills"
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