

In Lois Tyson's "critical theory today" Tyson discusses the use of post-colonial criticism when analyzing a literary work. Tyson states that the "Post colonial theory offers us a framework for examining the similarities among all critical theories that deal with human oppression, such as Marxism; feminism; gay, lesbian, and queer theories; and African American theory." (398) Essentially, this form of criticism draws from multiple perspectives in order to form another viewpoint. Additionally, Tyson goes on to state that post colonialism itself "Analyzes literature produced by cultures that developed in response to colonial domination. From the first point of colonial contact to the present." (399) It is here Tyson discusses the why and what of post colonial literature, which is essentially the viewpoint of oppressed minorities based on the aftermath of colonization. When using the post colonial perspective to analyze Langston Hughes's "Theme in English B" one can see how the text itself reinforces ideologies concerning racial superiority brought on by the oppression of African Americans through colonization.

This particular text was written in the late-early to mid 1900's when segregation was considered normal and black and whites had yet to see eye to eye. The text opens up with a white instructor assigned a predominantly white class an assignment which requires that each student "*go home and write a page.*" (Hughes) The text takes a sudden shift into the heart and mind of the only African American student in the class who turns out to be the narrator. He opens up his thought process by asking a question stating "I wonder if it's that simple?" (Hughes) It is here he is referring to the assignment mentioned above. This particular assignment requires him to write a page which he is told to "let that page come out of [him] then it will be true." I believe he questions this particular homework assignment due to the fact that as an African American male living in a dominant white male society, his voice is hardly heard or taken as the truth. Tyson states "a good deal of postcolonial criticism analyzes the ideological forces that, at one hand, pressed the colonized to internalize the colonizers' values." (398) When applying this quote to the text one can see why the narrator questions the assignment itself. This is due to the fact that he has internalized the racial ideologies that society has constructed which now allows him to believe that his opinion is devalued in the eyes of not only his white professor but society itself. He then goes on to describe his current life situation stating that he is

"the only colored student in my 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 is here the narrator (black man) indirectly discusses the differences between him and the average college student (white man). Through this detailed description of the narrator's current living situation the audience is able to peek into his life and understand how that might differ from the average college student during this time. The average college student in 1940-1950 was white (male). Majority of students at the time were afforded the opportunity to stay on campus opposed to students such as the narrator who had to live away from campus and commute due to the color of his skin. Although the narrator understands he must be segregated from the school he attends he states

“I guess being colored doesn’t make me *not* like
the same things other folks like who are other races.
So will my page be colored that I write?
Being me, it will not be white.
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.

It is here the narrator expresses his truth. Through postcolonial criticism we can see that the text itself indirectly acknowledges the ideologies concerning white superiority it leaves the audience to continue to put together the rest of his message. He understands that there is racial division within the country but he is also aware that he shares a plethora of similarities with other races. This allows him to further understand that although society adheres to the racial ideologies within this world at the end of the day no matter what race you are we are all human and American and can and should help one another. As the text states best, at the end of the day

“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!
As I learn from you,
I guess you learn from me—
although you’re older—and white—
and somewhat more free.”