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Sandbox Essay Marxism

Sandbox Essay Marxist Analysis of Theme for English B

Langston Hughes' poem "*Theme for English B*" is the epitome of Marxism, as the poem is centered around economic and socio-economic realities in which the main character has to navigate despite being limited. The poem delineates similarities between the main character and his professor but also the differences. For example, in the line, "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, see, and hear---" Langston Hughes plays with the coming of age narrative, looking at the question of how does one view themselves, come to terms with that, and come to terms with how the world views them. It almost denotes the idea that while everyone in the world has to go through this awakening of oneself and what one can do for themselves, the main character has to navigate other challenges produced against him, determining his "fate" within society.

Marxist Theory denotes that an individual is separate from social force that produces them. It is centered around the idea that human culture is not determined by economic and material realities or outside forces. This is interesting because marginalized groups would disagree, they would argue that success does come from influence, wealth, and environment. Langston Hughes cultivates that notion with the line, "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! As I learn from you, I guess you learn from me---although you're older---and white---and somewhat more free." The argument could be centered around privilege v. right, and in a Marxist world perhaps everyone has the right to

things regardless of predestined, or current conditions. However Langston Hughes touches on actual reality. Another argument that could be made is that the poem is just surface level, readers could look at the poem and think well, the main character is going to school, the main character is being allocated the same opportunities as other students. That in itself could be part of this Marxist lens, a false consciousness, where because one group isn't being marginalized or influenced in a certain way, because they have resources, and in turn are allowed to believe that everyone has equal opportunity separate from circumstance. False consciousness also plays a power role. If one cannot realize that false ideals promote an all inclusive narrative under false pretenses, they are giving more power to people in a position promoting these false ideals.

In "*Theme For English B*," there is a power dynamic that seems to be centered around false consciousness. Maybe the professor has a sense of false consciousness as he is treating the main character no different from any other student, whether he is aware of the socioeconomic differences, or any of the obstacles that the main character is going through. At the same time, the professor could be focusing on teaching as a means to help the main character get ahead despite the differences because he's seen the other side of it all, different from the main character's perspective. "*Theme For English B*" really challenges the view of Marxism, it poses the question who benefits and why? The poem touches on ways that capitalism reinforces power in its egalitarian utopic world of success being readily available to everyone.