Ashlyn Biggs Theme for English B Essay

We all know and love Lil Nas X, who is a black, LGBT artist in the music industry. He had struggles with coming out because of the people around him, he never planned to come out due to the pressure, fear, and he didn’t want others to see his invulnerability. He was scared of being different from the rest of society. In contrast, Langston Hughes “Theme for English B” recognizes that it’s hard for coloured people to figure out who they are while being surrounded by a racist community. By considering the similar interests of the speaker and his professor, the speaker’s upbringing in a predominantly black neighbourhood, and his use of confused language, we learn that it is sometimes difficult for people of colour to find their identity within a racialized society.

To begin, the similar interests of the speaker and his professor is one example which demonstrates in a racial society, it’s more challenging for people of colour to discover their identity. The speaker understands that being coloured doesn’t make him any different from his professor who is a different race. Moreover, he knows what is true for him “I like a pipe for a Christmas present, or records—Bessie, bop, or Bach” (23-24), he likes the same things his professor would, being coloured doesn’t change that. Undoubtedly, the speaker is saying that people like similar things regardless of their race. Therefore, by looking at the things the speaker and his professor have in common, comes a tough time for coloured people to uncover their character while living in a racist community.

Furthermore, by analyzing the speaker’s upbringing in a predominantly black neighbourhood is another part of the complication people of colour have while searching for their personality among a white community. The speaker was born and grew up in a place where it was mostly people of colour. This makes him feel out of place when he’s surrounded by his white classmates “I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston- Salem” (2) he is used to being around coloured people like him. Being the only coloured person in his class makes him feel like he doesn’t belong since his professor and classmates are all white. Thus, this shows readers the obstacles people of colour face while locating their identity within a racial community.

Ultimately, the progression of the complexity coloured people have in a racial society with understanding who they are leads to the clearest point being the use of his confused language. The speakers use of confused language shows the readers the doubt he has with understanding himself. He doesn’t recognize himself “hear you, hear me—we two—you, me, talk on this page. (I hear New York, too) Me—Who?” (19-20), the speaker is ultimately questioning himself since he doesn’t know his identification. In addition, examining the punctuation he used, he uses many dashes. The speaker uses them almost as if he were interrupting himself “Me—Who?” because he couldn’t finish the sentence and answer the question. The speaker uses these dashes to emphasize the uncertainty he has and to let the readers appreciate the deep meaning of what he is trying to say. For this reason, readers can understand the strain people of colour have with identifying themselves while existing in a racialized community.

People of colour have complications with perceiving themselves considering they live in a racialized society. We see the correlation between identity and living in a racist community in the speaker’s similarities with his professor, upbringing in a predominantly black neighbourhood and his use of confused language. In today’s world, everyone is so focused on one’s race, “I like a pipe for a Christmas present, or records—Bessie, bop, or Bach” being coloured doesn’t change peoples likes or dislikes and it doesn’t make us different from one another. People today are narrow-minded, if we learn to treat everyone as equals, we won’t make anyone feel like they don’t belong, because even though it’s 2021 people still feel like they don’t belong due to the colour of their skin. How would you feel if someone treated you differently because of your race?