

Poetry Analysis

For over 400 years now America has proven to be incapable of keeping its promise that it made when the founding fathers decided they wanted independence from Britain. They declared that “all men are created equal,” yet everyday they have shown a plethora of times that not every man is equal. In the early 20th century, the Harlem renaissance formed after the great migration of many African Americans moving into Harlem. During this time, many African Americans started finding and manifesting their voices. There were singers, poets, writers, sculptors, and many more coming out of the shadows. One of those poets who emerged from the darkness and used his voice was Langston Hughes who wrote a poem called “ Let America be America Again.” This poem expresses how America has not fulfilled its promise to act as a home to everyone, to treat everyone equally, to give people the chance to thrive, and to give people a safe haven. . In the poem “Let America be America Again,” Hughes implements metaphor/imagery, repetition, and rhetorical questions to showcase inequality in America.

To begin, by using metaphors and imagery, Hughes conveys his message that America has shown its true colors about their true intentions with people of color. He paints a vivid picture so the concept of America not being a home and showing more inequality than equality is able to be seen. Hughes states, “ I am the Negro bearing slavery’s scars... I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek,”(1). Imagine being torn from “Black Africa’s strand”(1). Placed in slavery, seen as inferior, beaten, and the only thing that you have to keep going is hope. Imagine that you are coming from a new country. You are foreign to this new country. You are scared, but you are excited because you have hope. Hope that things will be better. Hope that America will honor the “every man is equal” statement. Then you come to a realization that America is just “dog eat dog, mighty crush the weak”(1). That the white man trumps everything you stand for because you are simply a different race than he is, and you become buried in his shadow, yet you are still that young person filled with hope and strength even though you are trapped in an “endless chain” (1). The white man sees something he wants, he takes it

and you are back with nothing. When Langston Hughes says, "Let America be America again," he wants us to imagine an America where the dream we dreamed can be fulfilled and not one person is more important than the other, but everyone is equally important. Hughes uses metaphor and imagery to help you create the image in your head so that you know that today's America is not the America it should be.

Not only did he use metaphor and imagery, but Hughes also uses repetition to help reveal that America is not the America it claims to be. Hughes consistently repeats, "America" (1). This is the center of the topic: America. The supposedly home to everyone. The place where you can be "free" (1). Hughes repeats, "let it be" (1). Hughes is referring to America. America has to change; currently, it is something that it was never said to be. He says "Let it be the dream it used to be,"(1). It used to offer people everywhere a "dream" (1), yet it's a nightmare. Hughes claims twice, "America was never America to me" (1). America was never the dream he dreamed of. The founding fathers made it a point to offer freedom to everyone. To grant a sanctuary to those who wanted to start over and get a new life. The American dream they sold turned out to be a lie. Hughes uses repetition to help convey his message that America has not fulfilled its promise and it has not equally offered itself up as a home to everyone so that his readers understand that America is not the America it swore it would be.

Lastly, Hughes expresses his feelings towards America by using rhetorical questioning. He questions, "The free?.. Who said the free?," (1). America is supposed to be the "homeland of the free" (1), but Hughes wants the readers to ponder on that phrase. America claims to be the land of the free, yet there are Latinos in concentration camps, Native Americans who have been pushed out of their land, and African Americans getting lynched, shot and beaten because of the color of their skin. So the real question is who exactly is free? What exactly is free about America? Hughes wants to know are the "millions shot down when we strike" or the "millions who have nothing for our pay" are they free? Shouldn't the ones who built America from their sweat, blood, and tears be a part of the free that the

white man enjoys so much, considering they only stole America and the people who built America for them? Hughes questions this because America has yet to be the land where “every man is free” (1). America said we were the home of the free and yet the only ones who seem to be free are the people who think everyone is inferior to them. Hughes uses rhetorical questioning to help you open your eyes. To make you think deeply, who and what is exactly free about America?

In summary, Langston Hughes writes a poem called “Let America be America Again.” He uses metaphor/imagery, repetition, and rhetorical questions to help express his message that America was never the America it said it would be to the people of color. It was never a home to people of color. It has yet to follow through on the “all men are equal” promise. America was stolen by colonizers then they promised freedom. People of color never got their freedom. They were fooled. People of color have been oppressed for more than 400 years now. Hughes wrote this poem in the early 20th century, and we still have yet to reach our freedom. It is the 21st century now and every person of color cannot say they have reached their freedom and that America is the land of the free. What is free? People of color are unable to tell you the definition of free. When America is America again maybe then we can answer what is free.