

List two details from the writer's biography that might have influenced the writing or your understanding of the poem.

1. influenced by language of religious grandparents /read all of the Bible/read Baldwin
2. wrote about moral issues and experiences of the black man/wrote about jazz poetry

As you read the poem: Underline parts that relate to historical facts, especially African American issues
Circle words/phrases that stir up emotions
Place a question mark next to ideas that you don't recognize and may need to research
Place [] around parts of the poem that seem musical (call and response, rhythm, refrain, repetition, etc.)

After you read the poem, answer the following questions, quoting parts of the poem that led to your responses:

1. What historical background does a reader need to better understand this poem?

Thelonious Monk was a jazz pianist, Lennox Ave and 52nd street were hot jazz places in NYC

References to song titles, reference to bebop from earlier jazz days, and current funk music, reference to "modern malice," which is what Louis Armstrong called modern music

2. How does the poem relate to African American issues or jazz? Refer to historical context and text of the poem.

The references to the old jazz music and places frequented by Black musicians, and fans of jazz are special to many African Americans

3. Look at the emotional words you circled. Are those emotions more negative, or more positive? Both? What emotions do you think the writer wanted those words make you feel?

"senseless beauty" has both negative and positive, indicating the speaker has mixed emotions
"wailing a muted dirge" has a negative connotation; the speaker is sad about Thelonious's death
"old funky hat" is negative, but also gives a humorous feel to the speaker's memory

4. What musical qualities of the poem or song lyrics might influence the audience? How?

Riff/Call and Response: Thelonious is dead; other phrases reinforce the idea that with Thelonious, some of the old jazz music is also dead ("dirge," "ghost of bebop," "footprints in the snow,"

Polyphony: Reminders of songs that would "play" in the reader's mind while reading the poem

Groove: Long vowel sounds followed by short syllables that would be embellished by a singer ("O Satisfaction")

5. Think about your responses to questions 2-4. What might the poet be persuading the audience to think or do? Write your responses in a sentence.

The old jazz, like Thelonious, may be gone, but new jazz—the "modern malice," is alive and well, and the speaker of this poem likes it; he is sad, but also amused by Thelonious and his "old funky hat."

6. What did you learn from reading this poem?