

Annotated Poetry Analysis—Langston Hughes—“I, Too”

Before you read the poem, read the poet’s biography. List three details that might influence the poem.

1. (He traveled the world)
2. (He wanted to be a voice for African Americans)
3. (He worked for the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History)

As you read the poem: Underline words/phrases that relate to historical facts
 Circle words/phrases that stir up emotions
 Place a question mark next to ideas that you don’t recognize and may need to research

After you read the poem, answer the following questions:

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

(Whitman’s poem “I Hear America Singing”

(During segregation years, African Americans were sometimes served in the kitchens of “white only” restaurants)

Great Migration- by 1940, 1.5 million blacks migrated from southern U.S. to Northern industrial cities

Segregation and Discrimination in the North- housing discrimination, segregation of public facilities, job discrimination, race riots in St. Louis, Chicago and other cities

African American Communities- black press, black baseball, jazz and blues, black entrepreneurs

New African American Leaders- DuBois, Garvey, Randolph

Harlem Renaissance- artistic expression of the New Negro

2. How does this poem relate to migration? Refer to the historical context and text of the poem.

(Journey—lived/worked many places before arriving in Wash. D. C.)

(Reception/Reaction—experienced segregation and racism)

(Adjustment—“To-morrow/I’ll sit at the table—voice of Black experience)

3. Look at the words you circled as stirring up emotions. What emotions do those words make you feel? Are those emotions more negative, or more positive? Both?

(darker brother—negative; laugh, eat well, grow stronger, beautiful--positive

4. Think about your responses to questions 2 and 3. What might the poet be persuading you to think about migration and migrants? Write your responses in a sentence.

(African Americans have suffered from racism and segregation)

(African Americans will prevail/grow strong, and racism and segregation will end)

5. Based on your analysis, write a sentence expressing the poet’s message.

(Although African Americans are currently victims of racial discrimination and segregation, a time will come when they will grow strong and successful, and be accepted by white people, as "America," too.)

6. What did you learn by analyzing this poem?
