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Course: English 120

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Comparing and Contrasting the Narrator and his Brother, Sonny in *Sonny's Blues*

~~The story~~ *Sonny's Blues* narrates the lives of two brothers who grew up in Harlem in the early 1960s. The two brothers live their lives different despite being raised in the same

household. Despite their differences, Sonny and his brother are closer to each other even when they are far away from one another. Baldwin contrasts and compares the two brothers who not only differ in the way they internalize and cope with the problems but also depicts the selfishness in one character and remorsefulness in another for not being in the life of his brother.

The narrator does not know how to control his emotions, compared to his brother who keeps showing off his emotions. Whenever something makes him angry, the narrator stuffs his emotions down even when he is very disappointed. For example, when he found that his brother, Sonny, was arrested, he is unable to show his emotions. Instead, he prefers to respond with resentment; for instance, the narrator says that he "couldn't believe it; but what" he meant by that is that he "couldn't find any room for it anywhere inside" him (Baldwin 17). Even though he is disappointed with Sammy for being a junkie, the narrator fails to verbalize his feelings towards his disappointing brother.

Unlike his brother, Sonny, who tries to face his problems head-on, the narrator is unable to cope and deal with his problems. Instead, he prefers to act childish, and sometimes he even preferred to fold his arms as well as become silent. The two brothers have different ways of responding to crises; for instance, Sonny prefers to run away either mentally or physically, while

Capitalize all
major words
in your title

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the narrator prefers to evade them completely. Sonny runs away from school to join the navy as a way to move away from Harlem. Unlike his brother who tried to convince him to stay and finish up schooling, Sonny is convinced that moving away would be the best solution to his current troubles. Sonny tells his brother, that "I ain't learning nothing in school" as he moved out (Baldwin 32). Even though the narrator convinces his brother to face his problems, he, however, does not dare to face his problems. At least, Sonny has decided to take a step to move away from Harlem because he thinks that staying in that environment is causing him more trouble.

Despite their differences, the two brothers have the strongest bond with each other. The two try to keep their mother's last wish before she passed on for them to stay close. Even after Sonny refused to go to school anymore, the narrator calms down and offers to assist him instead. He says that "I'll help you do whatever you want to do; just try to put up with it till I come back" (Baldwin 32). The narrator is trying to keep his promise to keep care of Sonny even though he is disappointed with him. From their argument, the narrator is obviously upset with Sonny, but he tries to stay close to his brother. Even after they both moved away from each, the two brothers feel guilty of not staying close to each other as per their dying mother's wish. Sonny demonstrates this guilt clearly in his letter in which he says that "you don't know how much I needed to hear from you; I wanted to write you many a time, but I dug how much I must have hurt you" (Baldwin 22). Despite being the disappointing brother, Sonny manages to demonstrate courage to say sorry to his brother for his actions in the letter, which further illustrates their strong connection to each other.

In conclusion, the story "Sonny's Blue" describes the lives of two brothers who, despite growing up in the same environment developed two distinct character traits. Sonny is a drug addict who finds peace in drugs while his brother, the narrator, prefers to console himself in

silence instead of approaching his issues. Despite their differences, the two brothers have managed to retain their sibling bond even while in crisis.

Work Cited

Baldwin, James. "*Sonny's Blues*." The Jazz Fiction Anthology, Ed. Sascha Feinstein Indiana Up, 2009, 17-48). Accessed September 29, 2019. <http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/wooda/2B-HUM/Readings/Baldwin-Sonnys-Blues.pdf>

English 120: Grade Sheet

Literary Analysis Essay 1

Essay Grade: B-

I have identified the specific achievements and problem areas below. If you see an X next to one of the criteria, you did not achieve that particular objective. Depending on how severe and frequent the problems were in your writing assignment, you went down at least one letter grade for each objective you did not achieve. **Note: I did not grade your literary analysis essay based upon effort. Instead, I graded on the objectives listed below.**

Unity

Thesis statement

Does clearly indicate your topic.

X Does clearly indicate the controlling idea.—**You do not discuss the selfishness that you mention in your thesis.**

Is not an announcement of what you are going to do or write about in the essay.

Is the last sentence in the introduction paragraph.

X Paragraphs in the body of your essay do relate to and develop the thesis statement.—**You need to develop your ideas more to help your reader see the similarities and differences that you mention. Rather than discuss the two brothers equally, you focus on one or the other.**

X Topic sentences in the body of your essay do indicate what you discuss in the paragraphs and all of the sentences within the paragraph support it. It does not just indicate what happens next in the story.

Support

X Topic sentences in the body of your essay do develop one aspect of the thesis statement.

X Paragraphs in the body of your essay do provide specific and sufficient support for their topic sentences.

X Paragraphs in the body of your essay use summaries, paraphrases, and quotes from the short story to develop your thesis statement and topic sentences.

X Summaries, paraphrases, and quotes from the story are adequately explained in relation to the point that is being made.

X Your analysis within the paragraphs is adequately developed.

You develop your ideas rather than merely repeat them.

You analyze, not summarize, the story throughout your essay.

You do not provide your personal feelings and experiences in the essay.

Coherence

Paragraphs in the body do begin/end with a transition word or sentence.

Transition words are used within every paragraph where needed.

Paragraphs are organized logically within your essay.

X Sentences within your paragraphs are organized logically.

X Sentences within your paragraphs have fluidity.

- X** All related ideas are together in one paragraph.
- X** Summarized, paraphrased, and quoted material is correctly and smoothly integrated into the essay.
- You grab the reader's attention and introduce your topic before providing your thesis in your introduction.
- X** You restate your thesis in different words and bring the support of your point to a close without introducing new ideas in your conclusion.—**Develop your ideas more.**
- You have a title that indicates the topic of your paper.

Sentence Skills (You have the following grammar and punctuation mistakes in your essay.)

Fragments (frag)	X Quotation Marks
Run-ons (ro)	X Comma
Comma splices (cs)	Semicolons
Subject-Verb Agreement (agr)	Colons
Verb Tense (vt)	Apostrophe
Consistent Verb Tense (con t)	Hyphen
Pronoun Case (pro case)	Dash
Pronouns Reference (pro ref)	End Punctuation Mark
Pronoun Agreement (pro agr)	Parentheses
Consistent Point of View (con p)	Brackets
Pronoun Repetition (pro rep)	X Spelling (sp)
X Adjectives/Adverbs (adj/adv)	Wrong Word (ww)
Misplaced Modifier (mm)	X Word Choice (wc)
Dangling Modifier (dm)	Parallelism (//)
X Capitalization (cap/lc)	X Italics
Ellipses	Awkward (awk)/Unclear
I feel/think/believe	Contractions
Wordy	Second Person

Format (You are missing the following format requirements in your essay, or they are not formatted correctly.)

1" Margins	X Last Name & Page Number (on all pages in the top right-hand corner)
Double Space	12 pt. font
X Title	Times New Roman
Top left-hand corner of page 1 only:	X In-text Citations
Your Name	
My Name	
Class	
X Section Number	
Date	

Work Cited Page (You are missing the following work cited page requirements in your essay.)

Title-Work Cited	All Required Information for the Source
Double Space	All Information Is Organized
First Line Flush with Left Margin	Proper Punctuation

Subsequent Lines Indented

X Proper Mechanics (Underlining/Italicizing and Capitalization of All Necessary Words)

General Comments: When you quote a passage that already appears within quotation marks, you must use single quotation marks inside the double.

Do not forget to include in-text citations with paraphrased and summarized information just as you did with quoted passages. When you do not, it is considered plagiarism. You were penalized for the missing in-text citations in your essay. Try to avoid this same problem in the next two essays, for the penalty will be greater.

Please review Submitting Assignments in course information to learn what you should name your essay when you save it to your flash drive or computer.