

gpt

by D Denys

Submission date: 03-May-2019 05:42PM (UTC-0400)

Submission ID: 1124503505

File name: Sonny_s_Blues.docx (20.02K)

Word count: 1140

Character count: 5466

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Sonny' Blues

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1. What is meant by the word “blues” in the title what are Sonny’s Blues”

The word blues in "Sonny's Blues" indicates that Sonny is sad about life and for being an outcast. He is unhappy and depressed. In the story, it is revealed that Sonny plays jazz and blues, music invented by Africa American; therefore, in this case, the word blues might be implying the form of music that he plays.

3

2. Why according to the narrator were Sonny and his father estranged

According to the narrator, Sonny and his dad were alike in so many ways that were the reason they always fought and never got along. Sonny's dad spirit was changed when he witnessed his brother get intentionally run down by a car full of white people which traumatized him for the rest of his life.

3

3. What is the significance of the scene with the street singers

The scene with the street singers is significant to the story for various reasons. The narrator has a negative outlook of life whereby he is obsessed with suffering, and he seems to be comfortable

with it rather than seek out joy. When he sees the revival, his reaction is negative. However, afterward, he reconsiders the revival to hint growth in his perception about life and suffering. He begins to see what Sonny sees; that people can actively seek joy and happiness even though their circumstances are worse. The scene indicates a changing ⁸relationship between the narrator and Sonny. Finally, the narrator agrees to see Sonny play and they have an honest conversation about drugs and addiction. Sonny explains how drugs and music make him feel pleasure and joy. He tells the narrator that at the revival, when the woman was singing, he couldn't help but think how much suffering she must have endured" how much suffering she must have had to go through to sing like that." This scene gives the narrator a different perspective about life and suffering; while there is no way around suffering, one should never stop actively seeking joy and happiness.

¹
4. How would you describe the tone of the ending? What sort of resolution (if any) does the story or the narrator come to? Does the narrator express optimism/ pessimism?

The ending of the story illuminate's optimism to the narrator. While he has been criticizing Sonny for his interest in music, he finds that music is an entry point into confronting inner suffering. He no longer judges Sonny and the musicians but rather admires their sacrifice and persistence to guide others through their darkness and suffering through music. The ending indicates that the narrator's empathetic nature is growing as he begins to appreciate Sonny and his love for music. He actually finds relief from his suffering through Sonny's music.

¹
5. Sonny's Blues is populated by images of darkness and light. Trace a series of these images and discuss how the narrator uses them to create a particular atmosphere and to help tell his story

The theme of light and darkness has been used to highlight the sufferings and challenges that the narrator and Sonny have endured in life. Light in this context represents the positive of life while darkness represents the real struggles that surround the lives of the characters in the story.

Darkness in this context shows the real life on the streets of Harlem where people are bound by drugs and crime and poverty at higher levels. From the beginning of the story, the imagery of light and darkness is brought by the narrator, and this becomes a dominating theme throughout the story. The first scene introduces the narrator at the dark subway, contemplating the fate of Sonny. The "swinging lights of the subway car" allow him to read about Sonny's arrest, while the "darkness roared outside." This reference is important because it contrasts the society where the narrator and Sonny, his brother live.

Young people use drugs and engage in crime as a way of escaping the 'darkness' in their lives. Both light and darkness are present in the lives of the characters. Light is portrayed in the narrator's life as he is a teacher married to one wife and has children to suggest he lives a middle-class life. However, he faces constant darkness through the sufferings of his brother and his self-guilt for not having honored his mother's promise to protect Sonny. He feels that he is the reason Sonny turned to a life of crime and drugs. He is also fearful that his students might fall into the life of crime and drugs like his brother. He is full of negativities and never sees anything positive in his surroundings. Looking at Sonny's character, he is living in darkness. He lives a life of crime and drugs, and for that reason, he has served a term in jail. Sonny is a struggling jazz and blues musician who is addicted to heroin as a way to unleash the artistry and creativity inside him as well as escape his suffering. Sonny attempts to come out of the darkness and step into the light by overcoming drugs. After coming out of jail, Sonny's 'light' begins to reemerge as he is embraced with love from Isabel, the narrator's wife, and the narrator's sons. He also

pursues his love and interest for music which he finds as his guiding light. Looking at the broader perspective, the imagery of darkness and light represent the Harlem community which is deprived physically, economically and socially.

6. Explore ² these different sounds of jazz/blues music. Which song best expresses the theme of Sonny's Blues

The songs 'Am I Blue,' 'Blues for Alice' and 'The Weary Blues' have different sounds to differentiate their genre and nature. The song "Blues for Alice" jazz standard is primarily a 12 bar blues progression, but it has been changed from the normal standard of blues progression to bebop blues style chord. This gives it a complex scheme of harmony often called "Bird Blues." "The Weary Blues" is a poem written in free verse and all the lines that are not the poem's lyrics are rhyming couplets.

² The song that best describes the theme in "Sonny's Blues" is the Weary Blues. This poem tells the story of a narrator who recalls an evening of listening to a man singing the blues in Harlem. Both the weary Blues and Sonny's Blues have a common theme of the effect music brings in human life, identity crisis and the use of music as a means of communicating about challenges and issues experienced in life due to choices made in life. "The Weary Blues" uses imagery, somber tone, and depressed tone to convey the suffering that was experienced in Harlem in the mid-1900s.

Works cited

Baldwin, James. Sonny's blues. Ernst Klett Sprachen, 2009.

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