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## Revisiting the Discourse of Race and Power in Langston Hughes's "Theme for English B": A Critical Race and Bakhtinian Dialogic Perspective

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### Extended Abstract

This article presents a multidimensional analysis of Langston Hughes's poem "Theme for English B" through the lenses of Postcolonial Theory, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and Bakhtin's Dialogism. Although the poem appears to be a student's simple response to a writing assignment, it reveals profound insights into racial identity, systemic power, and educational hegemony. By situating the speaker at the intersection of Black identity, institutional whiteness, and formal education, Hughes transforms the poem into a space of resistance and redefinition.

From a postcolonial perspective, the poem foregrounds the internal struggle of a racialized subject negotiating identity within a dominant white academic space. Drawing on the works of Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Homi Bhabha, the analysis shows how the speaker resists assimilation while articulating a hybrid identity within what Bhabha terms the "Third Space." This space allows for a renegotiation of the self, neither entirely conforming to nor wholly rejecting dominant norms.

CRT offers a framework for analyzing the structural dimensions of racism reflected in the poem. Concepts such as "interest convergence" (Bell) and "intersectionality" (Crenshaw) help expose how institutional education marginalizes Black voices while superficially promoting inclusion. The speaker's racial isolation in class, paired with the professor's seemingly neutral instructions, unveils the hidden operations of systemic inequality. Hughes's use of personal narrative thus becomes an act of counter-storytelling that disrupts hegemonic discourse.

Bakhtin's dialogical theory further enhances the analysis by emphasizing the multiplicity of voices in the poem. The speaker's voice is not isolated but exists in a dialogic relationship with other cultural and institutional voices—those of the professor, society, and the broader American narrative. Through this polyphonic structure, the poem becomes a site of critical engagement and mutual learning, especially in its concluding lines: "As I learn from you, I guess you learn from me."

Ultimately, the poem emerges as a powerful critique of racialized knowledge production and a creative assertion of identity. Hughes constructs a poetic space where marginal voices confront institutional power, not through rejection, but through strategic dialogue, cultural hybridity, and narrative agency. This study underscores the significance of "Theme for English B" in representing cultural resistance and reimagining identity and American belonging from the margins.

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