



**Prejudice and Racial Discrimination as Reflected in Langston Hughes' "As I Grew Older"**

**A FINAL ACADEMIC PAPER**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
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In English Department, Faculty of Humanities  
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## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

The writer states truthfully that this project is compiled by him without taking the results from other research in any university, in S-1, S-2, and S-3 degree and in diploma. In addition, the writer ascertains that he does not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned in bibliography

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## **APPROVAL**

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## **MOTTO AND DEDICATION**

“Hard work beats talent when talent fails to work hard.”

- **Kevin Durant**

“It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop”

- **Confucius**

“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence”

- **Helen Keller**

**“This project is dedicated to my beloved family and friends”**

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I realize that this project is still far from perfect. Therefore, I will be glad to receive any constructive criticism and suggestions to make this project better.

Finally, I expect that this project will be useful for the readers.

Semarang, .....

Bagus Pamungkas

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## ABSTRACT

In this essay, the writer is interested in analyzing the problem of racial prejudice and discrimination as experienced by Black Americans in a poem written by Langston Hughes entitled "As I Grew Older". The writer uses two elements to analyze this poem. They are intrinsic and extrinsic elements. After understanding the intrinsic elements, the writer analyzes the poem with other relevant theories. In the intrinsic elements, the writer analyzes the imagery and the symbol. After understanding and analyzing the intrinsic elements, the writer uses an extrinsic approach which is the theory of prejudice and discrimination to determine prejudice and racial discrimination and its effects experienced by the Blacks. This analysis can be concluded that Hughes managed to express the injustice that the Blacks received. All bad treatments by the Whites are due to their skin color. The dreams of the Blacks are always gone by the dominance of the Whites. They have always been oppressed and they can only hope that they can be free from the oppression of the Whites.

Keywords : *Discrimination, Prejudice, Blacks, Whites*

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Poetry is a literary work that uses a beautiful meaning in its word in order to give certain values. In the progress of writing a poem, the author usually inserts some personal feelings that want to be conveyed through the poem. Perrine says that poetry might be defined as a kind of language that says more and says it more intensely than does ordinary language (1969: 3).

Born in Joplin, Missouri on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1902, James Mercer Langston Hughes, was one of the great black poets with a huge contribution in shaping the Harlem Renaissance of 1920s. He was an American poet with countless works in literature, including the poem entitled “As I Grew Older” analyzed in this final academic paper.

The writer chooses “As I Grew Older” because it has a deep meaning since it talks about the author dreams that cannot be fulfilled because he was a black man. This poem talks about a discrimination towards the author since he was a black man, where he wants to have the same rights as the white people to fulfill his dreams. The writer thinks that this is such an example of how the blacks lives in the era of discrimination, that their rights are being abused by the white people, and this is why the writer decides to choose this poem to be analyzed.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

This project was written in order to understand the message contained in this poem. The main purposes of this project are:

1. To analyze the intrinsic elements contained in Langston Hughes' poem entitled "As I Grew Older";
2. To understand how the prejudice and racial discrimination affect the life of the black people as reflected in Langston Hughes' poem entitled "As I Grew Older".

## **1.3 Scope of Study**

In analyzing the poem, the writer examines both the intrinsic and the extrinsic elements of the poem. For the intrinsic elements, the writer discusses imagery and symbol. In addition, the writer also uses the theory of prejudice and racial discrimination as the extrinsic elements.

## **1.4 Method of Study**

In the process of writing the paper, the writer uses the library research method to collect the data related to the paper by reading the books in library and electronic books on internet. The writer sorts and analyzes the data based on its relevance for the discussion contained in the poem and uses it to arrange the study.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Intrinsic Elements

In order to understand the prejudice and the racial discrimination contained in this poem, the writer first analyzes the intrinsic elements of the poem. In this paper, the writer tries to analyze the imagery and the symbol contained in the poem.

#### 2.1.1 Imagery

Imagery can be defined as a mental picture of poem, where the reader can experience what the poem says. Laurence Perrine says that imagery may be defined as the representative through language of sense experience (Perrine, 1969: 54).

According to Perrine, there are seven kinds of imagery, they are visual (sight) imagery, auditory (sound) imagery, olfactory (smell) imagery, gustatory (taste) imagery, tactile (touch) imagery, organic (internal sensation) imagery, and kinesthetic (movement and tension) imagery. From the seven kinds of imagery mentioned before, the writer only discusses two of them, which are visual imagery and kinesthetic imagery.

### **2.1.1.1 Visual Imagery**

Visual Imagery is imagery that represents the sight and usually is using description to create a scene for the reader (Perrine, 1969). The example of the visual imagery can be seen in a poem entitled *The Eagle* by Lord Alfred Tennyson:

*The wrinkled sea beneath him claws;  
He watches from his mountain walls,*

From the lines of the poem above, we can understand how author was trying to give such a vision of the eagle observing the sea in order to find its prey.

### **2.1.1.2 Kinesthetic imagery**

Kinesthetic imagery might be defined as an image of something that seems to move or a feeling of physical activity or action in general. Kinesthetic imagery creates an impression of movement which provides a dynamic sense of a poem. The example of the kinesthetic imagery can be seen in a poem entitled *The Villain* by W.H Davies:

*I turned my head and saw the wind,  
Not far from where I stood,*

The underlined word shows an action of the author. It describes the sense of movement of the author's head.

### 2.1.2 Symbol

In writing a poem, a poet usually uses a figurative language to describe something, one of which is symbol. A symbol may be roughly defined as something that means more than what it is” (Perrine, 1969: 83). Sometimes symbol means what it is, but it could also mean more by reason of resemblance, association, relationship or convention. A symbol could be in the form of words, objects, setting, events and character. The example of the symbol can be seen in the poem entitled *Ah Sunflower* by William Blake:

*Ah Sunflower, weary of time,  
Who countest the steps of the sun;  
Seeking after that sweet golden clime  
Where the traveller's journey is done*

In this poem, the author uses the word *sunflower* to symbolize the humankind and their desire for an everlasting life.

### 2.2 Extrinsic Element

Prejudice could be defined as a negative belief, feeling or attitude toward a different people, group of people, ethnic, or races formed by an irrational generalization that is not normally openly expressed. According to Allport, Prejudices can be briefly defined as thinking ill of others without sufficient warrants (1954:6). In addition, prejudice causes negative effect for the social life, such as the incidence of sentiment between one person to another or even between groups, ethnics, and races.

There are five-point hierarchical scale to describe how prejudice could be expressed. They are Antilocution, Avoidance, Discrimination, Physical Attack, and Extermination(Allport, 1954:14). In this case, the writer only focuses on the discrimination to describes how the prejudice expressed.

Discrimination is an unequal or unfair treatment against another person or a group of people based on race, ethnicity, skin colour, religion or other distinctive attributes.According to Devah Pager and Hana Sheperd in *The Sociology of Discrimination*, racial discrimination refers to unequal treatment of persons or groups on the basis of their race or ethnicity(2008:182).

### 2.3 The Poem

As I Grew Older

By: Langston Hughes

It was a long time ago.	1
I have almost forgotten my dream.	2
But it was there then,	3
In front of me,	4
Bright like a sun—	5
My dream.	6
And then the wall rose,	7
Rose slowly,	8
Slowly,	9
Between me and my dream.	10

Rose until it touched the sky—	11
The wall.	12
Shadow.	13
I am black.	14
I lie down in the shadow.	15
No longer the light of my dream before me,	16
Above me.	17
Only the thick wall.	18
Only the shadow.	19
My hands!	20
My dark hands!	21
Break through the wall!	22
Find my dream!	23
Help me to shatter this darkness,	24
To smash this night,	25
To break this shadow	26
Into a thousand lights of sun,	27
Into a thousand whirling dreams	28
Of sun!	29

Langston Hughes



## RESEARCH METHOD

Method of research is needed in order to find, develop, and test the correctness of this paper. To find the accurate data related to this paper, the writer uses the library research for this paper by collecting and sorting the appropriate data sourced from the library and internet related to this paper.

In analyzing the poem, the writer uses two kinds of approach, intrinsic and extrinsic approaches. Intrinsic approach is a theoretical approach applied and concerned in the intrinsic aspect of a literary work.

A poem has a lot of elements as the intrinsic element such as diction, imagery, figurative language, and others. In this paper, the writer will analyze the imagery and symbol as the intrinsic element used in the poem of Langston Hughes entitled "As I Grew Older". There are seven kinds of imagery, they are visual imagery, auditory imagery, olfactory imagery, gustatory imagery, tactile imagery, organic imagery, and kinesthetic imagery. In this paper, the writer only focuses on analyzing the visual and kinesthetic imagery. Meanwhile, for the extrinsic approach, the writer concerned with prejudice and the racial discrimination issue remembering that the poem itself talks about racial discrimination.



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