



**AFRICAN-AMERICAN RACIAL INEQUALITY
PORTRAYED IN HUGHES'S POEM**

MERRY-GO-ROUND

A THESIS

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Sarjana Degree

Majoring American Cultural Studies in English Department

Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University

Submitted by

GABRIELA HOSISETYA RODDENBERA

NIM: 13020115140085

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

DIPONEGORO UNIVERSITY

SEMARANG

2019

PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer honestly confirms that she compiles this thesis by herself and without taking any results from other researchers in S-1, S-2, S-3 and diploma degree of any university. The writer ascertains also that she does not quote any material from other publications except from the reference mentioned.

Semarang, May 2019

Gabriela Hosisetya Roddenbera

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

You will have bad times, but they will always make you up to the stuff you weren't paying attention to.

Robin Williams

Keep your dreams to yourself until you are strong enough to defend them, for they are easily destroyed by the comments of others.

Jerry Corsten

This paper is dedicated to

My beloved family and

To everyone who helped me accomplish this paper.

APPROVAL

**AFRICAN-AMERICAN RACIAL INEQUALITY AS
PORTRAYED IN HUGHES'S POEM *MERRY-GO-ROUND***

Written by

Gabriela Hosisetya Roddenbera

NIM: 13020115140085

is approved by the thesis advisor

On May, 2019

Thesis Advisor

Dra. Christina Resnitriwati, M.Hum
NIP. 19560216 198303 2001

The Head of the English Department

Dr. Agus Subiyanto, M.A.
NIP. 196408141990011001

VALIDATION

Approved by

Strata 1 Thesis Examination Committee

Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University

On July 2019

Chair Person

First Member,

Retno Wulandari, S.S., M.A.
NIP. 197505252005012002

Arido Laksono, S.S., M.Hum.
NIP. 197507111999031002

Second Member

Third Member

Rifka Pratama, S.Hum., M.A.
NIP. 199004280115111092

Dra. Wiwiek Sundari, M.Hum
NIP. 195906071990032001

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Praise be to Jesus Christus, who has given strength and true spirit so this thesis on “African-American Racial Inequality as Portrayed in Hughes’s Poem *Merry-Go-Round*” came to a completion. On this occasion, I would like to thank all those people who have contributed to the completion of this research report.

The deepest gratitude and appreciation are extended to Dra. Christina Resnitriwati, M.Hum. – my advisor – who has given her continuous guidance, helpful correction, moral support, advice, and suggestion, without which it is doubtful that this thesis came into completion.

My deepest thank also goes to the following:

1. Dr. Nurhayati, M. Hum as the Dean of Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University.
2. Dr. Agus Subiyanto, M.A as The Head of English Department Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University.
3. My father, my mother, and my twin brother for giving support in many aspects and worthy prayers.
4. All the lecturers (especially those teaching the American Cultural Studies) for teaching and giving me knowledge.
5. Maureen, Bella, Karina, Faradiba, and Imel for have been giving good times, love and supports since the very beginning of the writer’s study here.
6. Rifqi and Robertus for their endless companionship and supports from distance during the process of completing this thesis.
7. All my fellow students from 2015, especially those in American Cultural Studies class.

I realize that this thesis is still far from perfect. I, therefore will be glad to receive any constructive criticism and recommendation to make this thesis better.

Finally, I expect that this thesis will be useful to the reader who wishes to learn something about African-American racial inequalities.

Semarang, May 2019

Gabriela Hosisetya Roddenbera

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE.....	i
PRONOUNCEMENT.....	ii

MOTTO AND DEDICATION.....	iii
APPROVAL.....	iv
VALIDATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
ABSTRACT.....	x
CHAPTER I	INTRODUCTION
	A. Background of the Study..... 1
	B. Scope of the Study..... 2
	C. Purpose of the Study..... 3
	D. Methods of the Study..... 3
	E. Organization of the Study..... 4
CHAPTER II	BIOGRAPHY OF THE POET AND THE POETRY
	A. Biography of the Poet..... 6
	B. The Poetry..... 7
CHAPTER III	LITERARY REVIEW
	A. Intrinsic Elements..... 8
	1. Diction..... 8
	a. Denotation..... 8
	b. Connotation..... 8
	2. Figurative Language..... 9
	a. Symbol..... 9
	B. Extrinsic Elements..... 10
	1. Background..... 10
	2. Jim Crow Laws..... 12
	3. Racial Inequality..... 15

CHAPTER IV DISCUSSION

A. Intrinsic Aspect.....	18
1. The Diction of the Poem.....	18
2. The Symbol of the Poem.....	25
B. Extrinsic Aspect.....	27
1. Jim Crow Laws.....	27
2. Racial Inequalities.....	34

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION.....42

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABSTRAK

Amerika adalah negara multi ras. Kehadiran multi ras tersebut dilatarbelakangi banyaknya imigran yang datang ke tanah Amerika pada tahun 1600an dengan membawa latar belakang budaya masing-masing. Keberagaman ras dengan latar belakang yang berbeda ini telah membuat terbentuknya kaum mayoritas dan kaum minoritas. Merasa menjadi dominan atas kaum minoritas, kaum mayoritas mencoba untuk melakukan beberapa tindakan yang mengatur kaum minoritas secara tidak setara. Dalam kesempatan ini, penulis mencoba mengkaji sebuah puisi dengan latar belakang ketidaksetaraan ras yang dilakukan oleh kaum mayoritas di Amerika. Dalam hal ini, penulis memakai dua metode pendekatan, yaitu pendekatan intrinsik dan ekstrinsik. Dalam pendekatan intrinsik, penulis menganalisis diksi dan simbol. Dalam pendekatan ekstrinsik, penulis memakai hukum Jim Crow dan teori ketidaksetaraan. Melalui kedua pendekatan tersebut, penulis dapat menyimpulkan adanya ketidaksetaraan ras yang dialami oleh kaum kulit hitam. Kaum kulit hitam sebagai minoritas pada waktu itu mendapatkan perlakuan ketidaksetaraan ras dari kelompok mayoritas, kulit putih. Dibawah Jim Crow laws, penulis menemukan adanya pemisahan ras di transportasi umum dan tempat umum didalam puisi ini.

Kata Kunci: Race, Jim Crow Laws, Negro, Inequalities

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Poetry is a literary work that is often found by many people ranging from intellectuals to ordinary people from young to old. Poetry is made by using rhythmic language. Poetry can be said to be high value if it has a good language style and diction.

Bliss Perry in her book mentions that "*Poetry is an art that it expresses emotion through words rhythmically arranged*" (1920:8). Poetry usually speaks of the author's experience or facts about the life that happened around the author's life. One of the themes possessed by poetry is racial inequality.

The writer chose Langston Hughes as a writer who has his own experience and a fact about his surrounding life. Langston Hughes (1902-1967) is one of the poets who actively told poem about African-American life. He always investigated the experiences and conditions of black people deeply while emphasizing that "black is beautiful". X.J Kennedy and Dana Gioia says that Langston had a big concern for the uplift of his people, whose strengths, resiliency, courage, and humor, he wanted to note it as part of the general American experience (2007:82).

The bitter experience of African-Americans later contributed greatly to Hughes's literary work. Hughes wants the public to know the true condition of African-Americans at that time.

Racial inequality that occurred had made black people felt oppressed, which then lead them to a long struggle to reach the freedom

they had desired for so long. They struggled for recognition and human rights for a decent living. One form of their struggles is through literature.

Langston Hughes's expression in the *Merry-Go-Round* that was first published in 1942 looks very interesting to discuss. In this case the writer wants to further examine the intrinsic element and analyze the inequalities and racial experiences in African-American (black) races in the era where this poem was first published.

B. Scope of the Study

The writer limits the study on the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of the poem. The writer is going to analyze the racial inequalities experiences by the Blacks and their struggle against White hegemony as the majority of the society at that time toward the main character in the poem through diction and symbols.

C. Purpose of the Study

- a. To analyze the intrinsic and extrinsic elements in Langston Hughes's *Merry-Go-Round*
- b. To analyze inequalities and racial experiences in African-American (black) races toward the main character in the poem
- c. To analyze the struggle of the main character to face the racial inequalities

D. Methods of the Study

a. Methods of Research

Library research method is used in this study. This method collects the data from internet, book, and any other sources. Data that has been collected will be done by close reading, taking notes,

and discussing them. After collecting data, the next step analyzing it. Each analysis will be provided with evidence that has found.

b. Methods of Approach

Mimetic approach and Jim Crow Laws are used in this study. This study will use mimetic approach to know how far Langston Hughe's *Merry-Go-Round* portrayed the reality of the African-American misery.

Patricia Waugh in her book also defines mimetic approach as a form of imitation (2006:39). It defines literature in relation to a "life". Elias Schwartz in his book mentions that "*the idea of mimesis entails the idea of transitiveness –that there is something which is imitated*" (1972:5). He further says that the ultimate object of poetic imitation is action. The action referred to is not reality that appears from the outside but from the inner reality. He says that "*It is not mere emotion or sensation; it includes all modes of the psyche's activity*" (1972:6). This mimetic approach will help to represent the racial inequalities experienced by African-American (black) races through Jim Crow Laws.

E. Organization of the Study

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Chapter I will have 5 subchapter namely: the background of the study, the scope of the study, the purpose of the study, the methods of study, and the organization of the study.

CHAPTER II BIOGRAPHY OF THE POET AND THE POETRY

The biography of Langston Hughes as the poet of "Merry-Go-Round" will be briefly described in this chapter. This chapter will also show the intended poem "Merry-Go-Round".

CHAPTER III LITERARY REVIEW

In this chapter, the writer will explain some theories, literature reviews, or other things that are closely related to the topics that the writer discusses both intrinsically and extrinsically.

CHAPTER IV DISCUSSION

This chapter of the study will analyze the intrinsic and extrinsic elements in poetry which will then be provided with evidence from each analysis found.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

This chapter will summarize all the answers to the problems that are being discussed in this thesis.

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHY OF THE POET AND THE POETRY

A. Biography of the Poet

Langston Hughes who was born on February 1, 1902 in Joplin, Missouri has the full name of James Mercer Langston Hughes. According to *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, the parents of Langston Hughes divorced when he was little. Hughes' grandmother took care of himself until he was 13 years old (Rampersard, 1995: 8). Hughes's separation from his parents and the beginning of his exposure to poverty made Hughes identified himself with the poor and ordinary people and introduced himself to the blues music.

Critics Donald B. Gibson in his book says that Hughes was different from most of his predecessors (1973:52). He dared to write poems using language and themes, attitudes and ideas that were easy to understand for anyone who read them.

Hughes who was born to a black family has a double advantage of being American and black. Being an American poet, Hughes tried to think

innovatively. As a genius poet, Hughes combined all the results of his literary work with the Black experience he had, which then became a strong characteristic inherent in Hughes.

B. The Poetry

Merry-Go-Round

By: Langston Hughes

Where is the Jim Crow section

On this merry-go-round,

Mister, cause I want to ride?

Down South where I come from

White and colored

Can't sit side by side.

Down South on the train

There's a Jim Crow car.

On the bus we're put in the back—

But there ain't no back

To a merry-go-round!

Where's the horse

For a kid that's black?

CHAPTER III

LITERARY REVIEW

1. Intrinsic Elements

1.1. Diction

Diction or word selection is an important element in poetry. In choosing the words in their poems, the poets must be careful because the choice of words will call attention to themselves. Poetry is also the only literary work that is the most concise of other literary works. Michael Meyer further mentions that "*Functioning in a compressed atmosphere, the words in a poem must convey meanings gracefully and economically*" (1987: 547). Therefore, the reader is expected to pay attention to the way in which the meaning is conveyed.

1.1.1. Denotation

Denotation has the meaning that is the opposite of connotation. Michael Meyer mentions that "*Denotations are the literal, dictionary meanings of a word*" (1987: 549). For example, "birds" denotes a living creature with feathers and wings that are usually able to fly.

1.1.2. Connotation

Connotation is a word or phrase that has a different meaning from their denotative meaning. Michael Meyer asserts that "*Connotations*

derive from how the world has been used and the associations of the people make with it" (1987: 549). In other sense, connotation goes beyond a word's literal meanings. Therefore, the connotations of "bird" can include fragility, vulnerability, altitude, the sky, or freedom depending on the context or theme used in a literary work.

1.2. Figurative Language

Michael Meyer says that "*Figure of language is broadly defined as a way of saying one thing in terms of something else*" (1987:578). Even though figurative language is indirect, they are used to clarify our understanding of what they describe. Poets rarely use figurative language. It is because, as Emily Dickinson said, the work of poets is "*Tell all the truth but tell it slants*". The poets want to make the readers' interest and imagination developed by themselves. Thus, figurative language helps readers to imagine in a fresh way. Some examples of figurative language are simile, metaphor, hyperbole, and symbol.

1.2.1. Symbol

Michael Meyer asserts that "*a symbol is something that represents something else*" (1987: 597). An object, place, person, or event can have a certain meaning from the literal meaning. For example when there are two important leaders of a country shaking hands, it can mean a greetings. But if it happens frequently at a ceremony and before cameras, it might become a symbolic gesture signifying unity, issues resolved, and a negotiation is made. According to Michael Meyer we live where there are many symbols. For example when a sixty-thousand-dollar Mercedes Benz

passes on a road, we will quickly imagine not only an expensive car but also a luxurious and high-class life of executive officers who have power (1987: 597). People spend a big amount of money for a Mercedes-Benz car because they know the car's symbolic value. Thus, from this, we can conclude that a symbol has two meanings; meaning for itself, and meaning that means more than itself.

2. Extrinsic Elements

2.1. Background

According to the book *Review Text in American History* by Irving L. Gordon, Africans began migrating to the United States in the late 1600s during the slave trade. He states that “*They –the Negroes- were brought from Africa, starting in 1619, when a shipment of Negroes arrived at Jamestown in the colony of Virginia*” (1968: 315). In 1808, the Congress banned the importation of slaves, but the smuggling of slaves continued until 1860. Slaves, who were sold to America, were transported by ship and only the strongest were able to survive at the voyage.

Geographically, south is an area in the United State that is located between Atlantic Ocean and the Western of the United States. Tindal says that the southern colonies had one unique economic advantage, which is climate. He further mentions that tobacco was only one of many cash crops in the southern colonies. Timothy C Jacobson in his book says that the population of black slaves in the South was about 300,000 in 1763. Virginia had more slaves than any other colony- about 100,000. About

50,000 slaves lived in North Carolina, and 50,000 in Georgia (Jacobson, 1948: 39).

Many Africans were then employed on South plantations and only received a small wage. L. Irving Gordon says that “*They were considered by their white masters as property and as constituting an inferior race*” (1968: 315). African people then made several rebellions and tried to run away.

Africans then got their freedom for the first time under the Thirteenth Amendment which banned slavery throughout the United States. But during the reconstruction period, the Northerners began not to care about the problems of Africans, and white people in the South began to take back their control of their state governments. The Southerners did not intend to take back slavery but wanted to put Africans in the "right place" as subordinate and inferior. African people got low treatment politically, economically and socially. Politically, L. Irving Gordon says that “*Negroes were kept from voting by various devices, such as poll taxes and literacy tests*” (1968: 316). Economically, Africans only became sharecroppers. They were trapped in debts that caused them to be tied to their crops and lived in extreme poverty. L. Irving Gordon further mentions that “*Negro city workers were barred from many labor unions and relegated to the lowest paid occupations, or so-called "Jobs Negro"*” (1986: 316). One-drop rule and Jim Crow Laws also makes African people socially separated. Richard T Schaefer in his book says that “*one-drop rule is when a person has a single drop of "black blood", that is*

defined and viewed as Black, even if he or she appeared to be white "(2000: 223). It could explain clearly that in the South, the White legislators established official standards about who were "Black" and "White". Social inequality of race also does not only refer to the process by which a person enters a group of races based on physical conditions but also historical, cultural, and economic factors (Schaefer, 2000: 23).

2.2. Jim Crow Laws

Jim Crow laws passed in the late 1800s. It limited the freedom of the blacks. Shortly after that, Jim Crow laws became more than just a set of laws. David K. Fremon in his book says that "*Jim Crow laws are full of limitations for African Americans*" (2000: 27). Thus, we may conclude that Jim Crow laws were worse than slavery.

According to David K. Fremon, Jim Crow laws separated the blacks from the whites in schools, public transportation, hospital, and orphanages. Even their deaths did not stop the segregation that occurred. The blacks had separate cemeteries and funeral homes (2000:27).

Rasmussen further adds that Jim Crow governed almost all aspects of African-American life: where they could live, study, work, play, and worship; how they can go or travel or even where they could be jailed (1997:3). Basically, the separation that occurs was done invisibly; many African-Americans lived in unlabeled neighborhoods but in fact they lived in a neighborhood that was all completely Blacks - especially in the North.

Outside of the South, the neighborhood of white people did not need a "white only" sign to tell African-Americans that they were not welcomed (Rasmussen, 1997:3).

"White only" or "colored only" proclaimed by Jim Crow laws were everywhere at any facility. The signs were in restrooms, parks, hotels, and restaurants. In some places, such as post office and bank, white people must share a place with black people. But black people had to wait to be served because a post office officer or bank employee would serve white people first. Separate facilities for whites and blacks were the rule in many places throughout the Jim Crow era (David K. Fremon, 2000:43).

David K. Fremon further mentions that "*Life in the South had become a caste system*" (2000: 29). All black people no matter how high education they had or how well-dressed they were would always had lower rights than white people.

White people oppressed black people through the legal system and carried out acts of violence in many different ways. White people cheated the wages of black people, because they thought the black people were lack of education and were easy to deceive. White people treated them as mentioned earlier with the reason that it was the best for black people (David K. Fremon, 2000: 29).

In the South, black children could play together with white children. But when they were teenagers, their friendship ended. Black

people would address white people as "mister", "missus", or "miss". White people addressed black people "boy" or "girl" and "auntie" or "uncle" for older blacks (David K. Freemon, 2000: 31). Black people then became submissive, and white people became dominant.

Thousands of black Southerners then tried to escape to North. They hoped for a higher freedom and wages, even though they knew how dangerous it would be if they left South. David K. Freemon argued that “By 1900, six cities –New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Memphis, and New Orleans- had the least fifty thousand black inhabitants” (2000: 63). Many black people lived in urban areas at that time.

Jim Crow Law's application of black people is seen in the *Merry-Go-Round* poem taken by the writer. Jim Crow Laws had influenced social life in this character in this poem. Jim Crow Laws had the effect of racial inequality on black people in the 1960s which was clearly told through this poem.

2.3. Racial Inequality

Robert A Rothman says that “*Inequality is patterned rather than random*” (1993:2). He further mentions that there are many privileges, rewards, and opportunities that are obtained by people who are in certain social positions or membership in socially defined categories.

According to Rothman, there are three of the most prominent social categories in understanding the types of inequality, namely (1) Social Class (ie a position in the economic system defined by the occupation of the majority), (2) Color (race and ethnicity), and (3) Gender (1993:2).

Wirth in his book mentions that people of color are groups of people who because of physical or cultural characteristics are singled out from others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment (1945:37).

The existence of color differences in the human race is also a problem especially in multiracial countries such as the United States.

Glen C Loury defines race as:

“Race” is socially constructed mode of human categorization. That people use marks on the bodies of others to divide the field of human subjects into the subgroups we call “races” is a social convention for which no deeper justification in biological taxonomy to be had (2002:5).

From Loury’s explanation, it can be seen that race is a human grouping that is not based on biological conditions. Race is built by society signs on the body to divide humans into subgroups called "races". African American, Asian American, and Hispanic American are the examples of racial minorities owned by the United States. As a racial minority, they have experienced some bitter experiences with the "American Dream" of freedom, equality, and success through prejudice and discrimination.

Loury further explains that if a person feels conscious that he has been grouped into a certain people based on certain markers, then he will make the classification as a basis for differential actions that affect the welfare of his life. Loury says that "He will attend to them, become conscious in regard to them." (2002: 22). From Loury's explanation, it can be seen that if someone is grouped based on a certain classification, he/she will understand and identify himself as being "raced".

According to Loury (2002:95), racial inequality has two kinds of behavior. They are racial inequality in contract and racial inequality in contact. Racial inequality in contract is a request to be treated unequally towards people such as based on race in the implementation of formal transactions such as the purchase of goods or services or interactions with the public, bureaucracy, and the private sector (Loury, 2002: 95). Loury further said that "*Discrimination in a standardized manner means that reward bias against blacks has been effected*" (2002:95). Racial inequality in contact is an unequal treatment of a person based on a race that occurs in a relationship or association formed between individuals in social life including choosing neighbors, friends, heroes, and criminals (Loury, 2000: 96). According to Loury "*it - interracial inequality in contact - involves in the informal, private spheres of life*" (2002: 96).

From Loury's explanation, it can be seen that there is a fundamental difference between these types of racial inequality. Racial inequality in contract can occur in a liberal country, including the United

States. This kind of racial inequality exercises assessment and control in pursuit of social justice. Loury further mentions that, "The US courts did not have the necessary racially restrictive covenants in real estate deeds, or allow employers to" no black need apply "(2000: 96). Racial inequality in contract is legally prohibited because it is not in accordance with the desire of the United States to achieve the realization of liberal values.

The second type in the types of inequalities will be chosen by the writer. Color inequality or commonly equated with racial inequality can be clearly seen in this Langston Hughes's poem *Merry-Go-Round*. The writer on this occasion will analyze the racial inequality that occurs in this poetry.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

1. Intrinsic Aspect

The intrinsic aspects in the "*Merry-Go-Round*" which are going to be analyzed are the diction and the symbol. Through analyzing the intrinsic aspects of the poem, the writer is hoping that the readers will understand

the meaning of the poem and could get the message conveyed by the poem.

a. The Diction of the Poem

Where is the Jim Crow section line 1

The word "*section*" has a literal meaning as a part where separates a part from another. In this poem, Langston Hughes directs the word "*section*" as a separation of place for blacks and whites. The character in this poem is asking where the Jim Crow section is in a carousel. Through this line, it can be seen that the character in this poem is a black man (see Page 23).

In this line, Langston Hughes as the poet who is also one of the black people, feels that the separation of the section is not balanced or equal. This inequality can be seen in the next analysis.

On this merry-go-round line 2

Taken from online etymology dictionary, the word "merry-go-round" consists of the word merry (adjective) + go-round. Merry is Old English which means "fun" and "go-round" itself is spinning. The word "merry-go-round" was first used in 1729. "*Merry-go-round*" has a literal meaning as a carrousel. Carrousel is a large rotating machine in a carnival that has several riding horses that can be ridden by children. The word "*merry-go-round*" itself makes readers know that the character in this poem is a child. Langston Hughes through his poem wants to illustrate how racial inequalities not only have an impact and apply to adults but also to

the life of a little black child (see Page 23). Langston Hughes takes the character of a little black child to show his innocence of a phenomenon that occurred in his social environment at that time.

The word “*merry-go-round*” also indicates that the character in the poem is at a carnival that is crowded with local residents. But the character in the poem thinks that the crowd just makes him confused in trying to ride it. The confusion of the black child in this poem will be seen on the next line.

Mister, cause I want to ride? line 3

The underlined word for “*ride*” means that the character in this poem wants to climb or has a control movement in what he wants to ride as it moves. Blacks tend not to have any control or a part of something. They tend to be removed from society at that time. The character of a black child in this poem who only wants to ride the carousel need a permission to someone who is in charge of the carousel. Because all he knows is that he cannot move freely whatever he likes which causes the character in this poem ask the person in charge of the carrousel.

The use of the word “*mister*” also means that the character in this poem really respects someone who has a higher social status than himself (see Page 13). It is probable that the word “*mister*” refers to someone who is white. Langston Hughes points out that little black children have been taught that they are no longer equal hence the little black children have to respect white people.

Down South, where I come from line 4

Down South is a regional diction. From the underlined words, it can be found out that the character in this poem is from South. As it is known that Down South was once a place where many slaves from Africa came (see Page 10). Racial segregation that took place in South also happened. From this line it can be found out that the character in this poem is no longer in Down South. Most likely he is in the North region. But wherever he is now, it seems that he still carries his culture from the South that blacks do not get anywhere.

White and Colored line 5

The word “*white*” refers to the people of the white people who dominates the race in the United States. They usually carry out acts of racial inequality against races that are different from theirs in the United States. White people tend to get higher social status than other races in the United States. Through this poem, Langston Hughes wants to describe his childhood when blacks were demeaned by the majority.

The word “*colored*” in this case refers to Blacks. Langston Hughes in this poem would like to invite the readers to focus only on White and Black races.

Can't sit side by side. Line 6

The underlined word has the connotation word that “*sit*” means having an official position as something or as a member of something. In this poem, the character is not a part or member of the society. He looks set apart. The form of separation is through not getting a place to "sit". Langston Hughes in this poem wants to present that black people do not have an official position as a member of the society.

Phrase “*side by side*” also has a literal meaning which is coexisting or close together. Black people cannot live close to or next to white people. In this poem, Langston Hughes tries to give an idea of how the presence of his people is always set aside from the surrounding society. The character in this poem who is also a little child even know that he cannot be friends or even sit together with someone who is white.

Line 7-8

<i>Down South on the train</i>	7
<i>There's a Jim Crow car</i>	8

This underlined word means an area in South of the United States. Langston Hughes wants to emphasize once more that this poem takes the background of the character of a black child from the South of the United States territory. The situation of the black child from Down South also shows the issue of transportation. The character in this poem explains that in the Down South, on the

train, black people are separated from white people. The character in this poem is taught that there is other vehicles for black people and they cannot get into the train. Naturally, the little black child who is a character in this poem thinks that there is also a special part in this merry-go-round for him.

On the bus we're put in the back line 9

Langston Hughes in this poem wants to explain that this little black child gets a part of the bus that is furthest from the front, which is at the back. Langston Hughes in this poem is about to tell that blacks are always behind the white people. The meaning of the word "*back*" in this line has a simple but profound meaning, that is that black people will always be removed or kept away from the forefront, who is the white people, and the society around them.

Line 10-11

But there ain't no back 10
To a merry-go round 11

Ain't is a regional diction. Langston Hughes uses the words "*ain't*" and "*no*" to make a double negative of what he means. He means that in merry-go-round there is no one behind because merry-go-round is a circle. Langston Hughes in this line also hopes that at least in the merry-go-round, there will be no difference in place between blacks and whites. Merry-go-round is round and no little child can be separated when enjoying the game. The idea of

merry-go-round is a symbol of a better society where people will be seen as equal and no one will be separated again. This line also gives a hope that black people can have a chance to change so that they don't have to live under Jim Crow Laws.

For a kid that's black line 13

The word "*black*" has a literal meaning which means part of a color such as white, yellow, red or green. The word "*black*" makes the readers interpret a lot of their imagination. It could be that the word "*black*" can be interpreted as something dark, mystical or fear. In the sense of connotation, "*black*" refers to the race of a certain people that is black people. Because of the differences in skin color in their race, blacks received unequal treatment by white people.

b. The Symbol of the Poem

White and Colored line 5

The words "*white*" refers to the whites as the dominant and the word "*colored*" refers to the Blacks as the minority. The dominant race that has white supremacy has dominated other minority races in the United States.

To a merry-go round!line 11

"*Merry-go-round*" is a carousel. The carousel has a round shape. The round shape in the carousel has a symbol as the never ending cycle of racial inequalities in the U.S. The writer considers

Langston Hughes' contribution as one of the black poets who also experienced these racial inequalities. The round shape in the carousel also means that there is no front and back. Therefore, anyone who is riding a merry-go-round will be considered to be all equal, because all of them circled around the carousel without knowing who is behind and who is at the front.

The use of the “*merry-go-round*” word also symbolizes happiness for all young children including the character in this poem who is black. This symbol of happiness is reflected by the equality of each rider from the horses in the carousel.

Where's the horse line 12

“*Horse*” in the sense of denotation or literal meaning is a type of four-legged animal that someone can usually ride on. But in this poem, horse is a symbol of a right to life and freedom. Freedom makes the horses can run everywhere he likes. But on this line, the character of black child does not get the right to live and be free. The horses in the merry-go-round have already been arranged and even though they have been arranged, this character also needs to ask which horse he can ride. This means that anything which is good for the little black child getting the right to live and be free, he himself will still be regulated by the carousel itself. The horses in the merry-go-round are also arranged according to the circular merry-go-round form, which gives the meaning that the

struggle for freedom and rights for life will continue to spin and never stop.

2. Extrinsic Aspect

a. Jim Crow Laws

After analyzing the intrinsic aspects of Langston Hughes' *Merry-Go-Round* poem, we can find the Jim Crow Laws in the form of racial inequalities which were experienced by black people. Based on the theory presented in the previous chapter, Jim Crow Laws is a set of laws or regulations that regulates and separates black and white people. The regulations or separations that were made often occurred in schools, public transportation, hospitals, public space, orphanages, and so on. In this paper, the writer can find two types of separation of Jim Crow laws that are present, namely: in public space and in public transportation.

Jim Crow laws in the type of separation in public space can be seen from line 1-3.

Line 1-3

<i>Where is the Jim Crow section</i>	1
<i>On this merry-go-round</i>	2
<i>Mister, cause I want to ride</i>	3

In this line it can be seen that the character in this poem is a black child who wants to ride a carousel in a carnival. In this line too, the character of a small child is already familiar with the presence of Jim Crow Laws. The character in this poem feels used to Jim Crow laws because he himself is a black person. The writer can say that the character in this poem is black because, as in the discussion in the previous section of the diction, in line 1 the word "section" refers to a separation of place. Separation of place in question is the separation of places between black people and white people. It is assumed that the separated character is black person. Another evidence to strengthen the argument that the character in this poem is someone who is black is the word "mister" in line 3. As the writer has conveyed in the previous section of the diction, the word "mister" implies that the character in this poem truly respects someone who has a higher social status than himself. This gives the readers an information that the character in this poem is someone who has a lower social class. When Jim Crow Laws was passed, white people thought that black people were in a social class that was lower than them. Due to the differences in social class, white people tried to separate themselves from black people. Both of these evidences strengthen the writer's argument that the character in this poem is a black child.

Carnival is a form of public space. Carnival has many facilities such as carousels, ferris wheel, and jet coasters. Carnival should be a place of entertainment for all people regardless they are rich or poor, white or black. But in lines 1-3, it is clear that there is still a form of separation between blacks and whites. The character who is a black child in this poem is asking where the Jim Crow section is in a carousel that he wants to ride.

Taking from the next line

Down South, where I come from Line 4

It can be seen that the character in this poem is not in his hometown, South. Wherever he is now, he feels that he has become a part of the Jim Crow laws. Accustomed to his childhood with Jim Crow Laws, the character in this poem has a problem finding the backward part of a carousel he wants to ride. The little black child has a habit of sitting at the very back of any public space.

The familiarity of the character in this poem makes him feel strange if there is no Jim Crow laws in the carousel he will ride. The character in this poem can make the readers see that Langston Hughes, as one of the African-American black poets, has become accustomed to the existence of the Jim Crow laws in his life. Langston Hughes sees from the bitter experiences experienced by his people. The innocence of this little black child is the result of what he received throughout his life since childhood. The little black child has experienced racial inequalities in his life with the

existence of Jim Crow Laws. Jim Crow laws that are present in the life of this little black child makes him realize that he has to be in the back position of almost everything. If we further examine, the white children will not need to bother asking where the horse in the merry-go-round is they will ride on.

Besides presenting the never ending cycle of racial inequalities in the U.S, in the previous discussion about symbol, the word "*merry-go-round*" in this line also explains that there is no one behind. It means that there is no definite meaning of the Jim Crow section in merry-go-round or carrousel.

In this line, it also seems clear that there arises a social difference. There is a group or class in the society that becomes a category of people affected by "Jim Crow Laws" or not. The carousel in this line also presents a symbol of happiness for young children. But this symbol of happiness is questioned in this line. Langston Hughes tries to ask whether a symbol of happiness for this small black child must be distinguished or not. Since it is their right for all young children to be happy regardless of what their form of happiness are.

The separation of the second type of Jim Crow laws is the separation between black and white in public transportation. The evidences of the separation in public transportation can be seen in lines 4-6 and line 7-8.

Line 4-6

Down South where I come from 4

White and Colored 5

Can't sit side by side 6

Through the Jim Crow Laws, the minorities like black people do not have the right to be able to sit side by side with white people, even though they both pay for a seat in a transportation. This is another evidence that Jim Crow laws is present to separate black and white people in public transportation. This line is also a continuation of what the little black child says as a character in this poem. The black child in this poem clearly explains that he is from the South where he cannot sit side by side with the white people as the majority. Jim Crow Laws have separated blacks and whites. The saddest thing about this line is that even a little child knows that white people and black people must be separated.

In this line, Langston Hughes constantly states that the separation of people in society really happens solely based on skin color differences, which in this case blacks and whites. It is this separation that forces blacks, like Langston Hughes, to always deal with the problem in their everyday world.

This line also reaffirms that the character, the little black child, is not in his hometown, Down South. This little black child is

outside his hometown and still feels familiar with the Jim Crow Laws from his hometown. So even though he is not in his hometown now, he still brings his habit and his familiarity to the city where he is now. The character in this poem once again confirms the confusion as to why there is no place for black people to sit apart from white people.

The character in this poem, who is a small black child, then continues his explanation that he knows that, he as a black person, cannot sit next to white people. This happens because of the presence of Jim Crow laws which dominates the whole social life of black people in the South. If the black people is in a transportation, they will find a separate section or a part specifically for their skin race where it is at the back of a transportation. The popular Jim Crow laws in the South have banned black people from joining white people in public facilities.

The separation between black and white in Jim Crow Laws in public transportation is also strengthened again in line 7-8.

Line 7-8

Down South on the train 7

There's a Jim Crow car 8

The word "*there*" in this line refers to something that happens or exists. Down South is the place referred to by the poet. Langston Hughes in this poem wants to clearly state again that Jim Crow laws are present at the Down South in the form of the separation of transportation specifically for blacks and whites. The blacks get different transportation which are less comfortable than the white's.

This line is also another supporting evidence of the character's argument in this poem. The little black child who is the character in this poem tries to tell the reader again that Jim Crow Laws is present in South in its own car form for black people who wants to ride a train. Langston Hughes in this poem tries to tell the reader that every time that black people try to board a train, instead of riding the train they will take a certain car available only to blacks.

This line is also an another evidence of the fact that Langston Hughes experienced many experiences of racial separation due to Jim Crow laws in his place of life in the South. It also clarifies that Jim Crow laws truly forbid any freedman to ride in any first-class passenger cars, or used by and for white persons.

b. Racial Inequalities

Based on the previous theory of inequality, it can be known that inequality can occur when a group that is based on a particular criteria gets more privileges, rewards, and opportunities than the other groups because of their higher or important position in the society. The *Merry-Go-Round* poem was published in 1942, in which the year of the white race was very dominating from the other races.

The sense of dominance possessed by the white race makes some forms of racial inequality in America, one of which is racial inequality experienced by blacks.

Racial inequality in this poem can be very clearly seen. Based on the previous theory of inequalities, it is said that racial inequality has two types of behaviour, namely racial inequality in contract and racial inequality in contact. Through this theory, the writer can argue that all forms of racial inequalities in this poem are racial inequality in contact. This can be said because the character in this poem gets unequal treatment based on his race which occurred in his relation to the society.

If racial inequality in contract is a racial inequality that is requested in relation to the business sector such as making a special housing for only white people or providing job vacancies where the black race cannot register, racial inequality in contact leads to not achieving commitment to the principle of freedom. The U.S is a liberal country. But the freedom echoed by the government of the

U.S is not like in the reality. In his poem, *Merry-Go-Round*, Langston Hughes tries to convey how the freedom of black people was still limited at that time. Racial inequality in contact occurs in this poem when the character in this poem tries to get his right as equal human beings to only get a ride in a merry-go-round.

Racial inequality in contact happened in infomal sectors.

The unequal treatment takes place in the informal sector in this poem namely: in public space and public transportation. The character who is a black person feels being excluded and distinguished from the society where the majority is white people.

The feeling of being excluded or distinguished can be seen on lines 3, 4-6, 9, 10-11, and 12-13.

Mister, cause I want to ride? line 3

Based on the previous diction analysis, the underlined word means someone who has a higher position than others. Jim Crow laws have limited black people to white people. White people are considered to be more dominant than black people. The dominant feeling possessed by whites makes minorities, in this case black people, feel oppressed. The character in this poem who is a black child must politely ask one of the carousel officers. Langston Hughes in this poem tries to tell the readers that there are rules for calling white people. Black people would call "mister" for white men and "miss" for white women. In this case it means that there is

a racial inequality that occurs that is the black people are considered to have a lower social status than white people.

The line also states that racial inequalities has come to the point where the parents of black children must forbid or prevent their children from having a little fun in a carnival, in this case riding a carousel. The pleasure of black children must be limited solely because of the difference in skin color they have from the majority of skin color.

In summary, the racial inequality that occurs in this line has made it difficult for black children to get the same rights as a child to get a ride in the carousel and they all have to call the whites with “Mister” or “Miss”.

Line 4-6

<i>Down South where I come from</i>	4
<i>White and colored</i>	5
<i>Can't sit side by side.</i>	6

This line wants black people to be able to live side by side with white people so that they can live close together with white people. The character in this poem wants to tell that in his hometown, in the South, he as a black citizen cannot sit side by side with white people. This is a form of racial inequality. Because all races should have the same right to be able to sit side by side. The black people do not get their human rights as fellow citizens to be able to socialize with people especially white people.

On the bus we're put in the back line 9

This line shows that blacks at that time were obedient to existing regulations. The rules that existed at that time were Jim Crow Laws. Racial inequalities referred to in this line are black people who cannot sit in the front. White people always have a place to sit in the front while the blacks are removed. In this poem, Langston Hughes wants to tell the reader that black people are always underestimated and given the back seat. Black people who are always behind the bus means that they are always at the back of a society.

The form of racial inequality that appears in this line is that only the white people are able to sit in the front, while the different colors from their's cannot sit in the front.

Line 10-11

<i>But there's no back</i>	10
<i>To a Merry-Go-Round!</i>	11

This line explains the inability of the society at that time to bring black people remained down. It is because previously there is nothing backward in the merry-go-round.

The word "*merry-go-round*" in this line also means that racial inequalities will not end. It can be said that it cannot end because Langston Hughes symbolizes merry-go-round, as a circular. The circle indicates that existing racial inequalities are a phenomenon that cannot be avoided by the American nation as a multi-racial country.

Langston Hughes, who had a background as a black person in the United States, was fed up and tired of racial inequalities that

he and his people experienced. He stresses once again that racial inequalities are something that is seen as not going to end. Therefore he wrote the *Merry-Go-Round* poem.

This line also means that black people in America will not be forever separated. The evidence is that the merry-go-round has no back and front. When the merry-go-round runs or starts, all passengers will be equal.

Paradoxically, the world appears to have been opened from the side of the carousel but this remains closed. The carousel will only keep circling on the axis. But at least this carousel is a slightly better metaphor for the life of the world where everyone can live freely regardless of their skin color.

The question asked by the character of this little black child is also something interesting to discuss. Not because we are waiting for what the answer of the mister will be from this poem but rather how illogical arbitrary the racial inequality is. The arbitrariness and irrationality of racial inequalities will always revolve like the shape of a carousel in this poetry.

Line 12-13

<i>Where's the horse</i>	12
<i>For a kid that's black</i>	13

The United States is a multi-racial country. A reflection of the diversity of these races is present in Langston Hughes's poem, *Merry-Go-Round*. In this poem, it is clear that there are two main

racism being played, namely black and white races (see Page 21). In this line, a black child who is the main character in this poem concludes that he is a product of racial inequality that occurs. Therefore, whatever the character in this poem will do, or in the context of this poem is riding, the little black child needs to ask first where his position is.

This line also draws conclusions and shows the feelings of racial inequality experienced by black children. This racial inequality has made the little black child feel at a different place or position than the white people as the majority. The little black child is having trouble getting "horse" like other white children in this carnival.

As the writer discussed in the previous sub-chapter symbol, in this line there is a word "horse". The horse in this line has the meaning of life or freedom. Langston Hughes in this poem is asking where justice for the life and freedom of black people living in America at that time.

In this poem, Langston Hughes explains that the character of this black child is being confronted with a conflict between new rules and old rules. This character of a black child lost the old rules because he is in a new place and he does not know what he should do. In this poem, whether or not he will ride a merry-go-round is not a problem. But what will be examined is that the character of this little black child is being offered a choice that he had never been allowed to contemplate until now.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

After the writer succeeded in analyzing Langston Hughes's poem entitled *Merry-Go-Round*, the writer is able to conclude into several points. First, the *Merry-Go-Round* poem written by Langston Hughes uses diction choices that are easily understood by readers. The selection of diction which is easily understood by the reader solely aims to describe the conditions of racial inequality experienced by blacks at that time. Langston Hughes also uses several symbols to express the hidden message he wants to convey through this poem.

Second, in the analysis chapter, Langston Hughes describes his childhood when he and other black children were very familiar with Jim Crow laws. The presence of Jim Crow laws in this poem is in the form of the separation of black people and white people in public transportation and public space.

The dominance of the white people as the majority has led to some forms of inequality towards blacks as a minority. One form of the inequalities is racial inequality. Racial inequality that occurs in this poem is racial in contact inequality, it is racial inequality that occurs solely because of its relationship with the community and not achieving the concept of the principle of freedom. Black people feel removed from society. They are considered to have lower social status than the white people. Black people do not have the right to sit side by side with

white people and are always placed in the back seat. But as much as possible the society wants to separate black people, it turns out there is no backward part in a carousel. Langston Hughes takes this poem to say that there will be a hope for blacks not to always live under racial inequality even though this racial inequality would continue to occur like a round carousel.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Fremon, David K. *Jim Crow Laws and Racism in American History*. Enslow Publisher, 2000.
- Gibson, Donald B. *Modern Black Poets: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Prentice Hall, 1973.
- Gioia, X.J. Kennedy and Dana. *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama: Interactive Edition*. Pearson Longman, 2007.
- Gordon, Irving L. *Review Text in American History*. New York: Amsco School Publications, 1968.
- Jacobson, Timothy C. *Heritage of the South*. New York: Crescent Books, 1992.
- Loury, Gleen C. *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality*. Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Meyer, Michael. *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*. St Martins; First Edition edition, 1987.
- Perry, Bliss. *A Study of Poetry*. Houghton Mifflin, 1920.
- Rampersad, Arnold. *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*. Vintage Books, 1995.
- Rasmussen, R. Kent. *Farewell to Jim Crow*. New York: Facts on File, 1997.
- Rothman, Robert A. *Inequality and Stratification: Class, Color, and Gender*. Prentice Hall, 1993.
- Schaefer, Richard T. *Sociology: a Brief Introduction*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000.
- Schwartz, Elias. *The Forms of Feeling: Toward a Mimetic Theory of Literature*. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Express, 1972.
- Tindall, George Brown, David E Shi dan Thomas L. Percy. *The essential America*. New York: Norton, 2001.
- Waugh, Patricia. *Literary Theory and Criticism: an Oxford Guide*. Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Wirth, Louis. *The Science of Man in the World Crisis*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1945.