Analysis Of The Poem Theme For English B By Langston Hughes

In Langston Hughes' poem "Theme for English B" he elucidates the internal struggle one has when being given the assignment of writing a self-reflective piece on oneself. Being a minority in a predominantly white class, Hughes feared the preconceived notion one may have about him once they knew his background. Hence he was hesitant on whether he should write as a regular English student or have his cultural identity influence his writing.

Throughout the poem, Hughes undergoes a myriad of emotions. In the second stanza, Hughes is conflicted on whether his peers and professor could relate to him as he list lists the obvious differences between them: race and where he resides. In this stanza, race plays a vital role in Hughes' thought process because during his lifetime, society often had preconceived judgments about minorities, which made many minorities feel inferior and struggle to relate to white people. However, in the fourth stanza, Hughes realizes that despite the obvious difference of race and where he has resided, there were more similarities between him and his white counterparts "I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love". As he delves into a more introspective outlook of his life and their similarities. He realized that despite being African American and having lived in places such as Salem or Harlem, race should never constrict one into a box where "being colored doesn't make me not like the same things other folks like who are other races". Moreover, realizing that when one has diverse and varying backgrounds, one must not feel shame to represent their race or culture, but should feel proud and be able to teach and learn from others about their cultures. This is because when we learn about others and their cultures, we are able to gain a new found perspective that isn't narrow-minded.

I found this poem to be extremely powerful and paralleled to my experiences of being a college student. I think that being a freshman and having to formulate relationships with strangers who come from differing backgrounds than yourself, can be very difficult to do. This because often times we are so used to being around people who have the same experiences as us, that we turn a blind eye to those who may be of a different race or have a different background because qe assume that we have nothing in common. However, what I have realized is that once one gets to know a person on a deeper level, beyond the surface of what race or where they're from, we can truly be able to find friends. I found Hughes line "As I learn from you, / I guess you learn from me" to be impactful in my life because I have been given the opportunity to meet people from all parts of the globe, who I may have similarities with or some who have different backgrounds from me, however they have all taught me new things about themselves and culture I had never known. In addition, I have realized the importance of expressing one's background and identity through one's writing because it creates an environment where one can gain a differing perspective where they can learn and gain greater knowledge from others.