

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Racial discrimination is “to treat differently a person or a group of people based on their race origin” (“Racial Discrimination”) A clear example of discrimination towards black people in America in 1920’s is that “Kentucky required separate schools, and also that no text book would be issued to a black would ever be reissued or redistributed, they were also prohibited interracial marriage” (“Segregation”).

Langston Hughes is a poet who gains fame “during the burgeoning of the arts known as the Harlem Renaissance” (Harper). Langston Hughes began to write in 1921 until 1954. In 1921, Hughes’ “The Negro Speaks of rivers,” was published in NAACP journal Crisis (“Langston Hughes Timeline”). Hughes’ first volume of poetry, The Weary Blues, appeared in 1926. A year later, Hughes’ second volume of poetry, Fine Clothes to the Jew, was published. In addition, Langston Hughes’ first novel, Not Without Laughter was published in 1930. In writing most of his poetry, Langston Hughes “uses the rhythms of African-

American music particularly blues and jazz. This sets his poetry apart from that of other writers, and it allowed him to experiment with a very rhythmic free verse” (Langston Hughes Biography). Langston Hughes’ poems that I will discuss in my thesis are “I Dream a World”, “Ruby Brown”, “Merry-Go-Round” and “A New Song”. I choose to analyze the four poems in my thesis since they closely deal with discrimination towards black people.

Countee Cullen is a poet who attains fame “during the era known as the New Negro or Harlem Renaissance” (Early). Moreover, Cullen also was known as the most popular black poet and black literary figure in Dewitt Clinton High School. While in high school, Cullen won his first contest, a citywide competition, with the poem “I Have a Rendezvous with Life” (Early). At New York University, he wrote most of the poems for his first three volumes: Color (1925), Copper Sun (1927), and The Ballad of the Brown Girl (1927) (Early). Countee Cullen was “a romantic lyric poet” (Johnson). Cullen’s poems that I will discuss in my thesis are entitled “Incident”, “Uncle Jim”, “Scottsboro, Too, Is Worth Its Song (A poem to American poets)” and “A Brown Girl Dead”. I choose to analyze the four poems in my thesis as they deal with discrimination towards black people.

In my thesis, I am going to analyze the themes of Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen’s poems. All of their poems are concerned with discrimination towards black people. The definition of theme is “the central concept develops in a poem” (Reaske 42). I will analyze the theme of the poems through diction, which is defined as “the use of words in poetry.” (Reaske 31).

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

1. What is the theme of each poem?
2. How is the theme revealed?

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

1. To show the theme of each poem.
2. To show how the theme is revealed.

## **METHOD OF RESEARCH**

I conduct library research for my thesis. First, I read the poems. After that, I analyze these poems through the dictions. And then, I search for a number of references from books and Internet websites. In the end, I draw conclusion from my thesis.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

I divide my thesis into three parts, preceded by the Acknowledgments, the Abstract, and the Table of Contents. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is The Theme Analysis of Four of Langston Hughes's Poems. Chapter Three is The Theme Analysis of Four of Countee Cullen Poems. Chapter Four is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with Bibliography and Appendices, which contain Langston Hughes' and Countee Cullen's poems and the Biographies of Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen.