

Sonny's Blues Study Guide



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Summary

The narrator, a teacher in Harlem, has escaped the ghetto, creating a stable and secure life for himself despite the destructive pressures that he sees destroying so many young blacks. He sees African American adolescents discovering the limits placed on them by a racist society at the very moment when they are discovering their abilities. He tells the story of his relationship with his younger brother, Sonny. That relationship has moved through phases of separation and return. After their parents' deaths, he tried and failed to be a father to Sonny. For a while, he believed that Sonny had succumbed to the destructive influences of Harlem life. Finally, however, they achieved a reconciliation in which the narrator came to understand the value and the importance of Sonny's need to be a jazz pianist.

The story opens with a crisis in their relationship. The narrator reads in the newspaper that Sonny was taken into custody in a drug raid. He learns that Sonny is addicted to heroin and that he will be sent to a treatment facility to be "cured." Unable to believe that his gentle and quiet brother could have so abused himself, the narrator cannot reopen communication with Sonny until a second crisis occurs, the death of his daughter from polio. When Sonny is released, the narrator brings him to live with his family.

The middle section of the story is a flashback. The narrator remembers his last talk with his mother, in which she made him promise to "be there" for Sonny. Home on leave from the army, he has seen little of Sonny, who is then in school. His mother tells him about the death of his uncle, a story she had kept from him until this moment. His uncle, much loved by his father, was killed in a hit-and-run accident by a group of drunken whites who miscalculated in an attempt to frighten the young man. The pain, sorrow, and rage this event aroused colored his father's whole life, especially his relationship with Sonny, who reminded him of his brother. She tells the narrator this story partly in order to illustrate that there is no safety from suffering in their world. The narrator cannot protect Sonny from the world any more than his father could protect his own brother. Such suffering is a manifestation of the general chaos of life out of which people struggle to create some order and meaning. Though suffering cannot be avoided, one can struggle against it, and one can support others in their struggles.

From this conversation, the narrator brings the story forward through his marriage and return to the army; Sonny's announcement at their mother's funeral that he intends to be a jazz pianist; Sonny's attempt to live with the narrator's wife's family, teaching himself piano while the narrator is away at war; the failure of this arrangement; Sonny's term in the navy; and, after the war, a final break between the brothers because of the narrator's inability to accept Sonny's way of life. The narrator then explains the suffering he and his wife felt at the death of their daughter, suffering that made him want to write to Sonny at the treatment center and that finally began to make him appreciate the importance of having someone to talk to, a source of comfort in suffering.

Sonnys Blues Study Guide

Yijin Wang



Sonnys Blues Study Guide:

Adopting the Track of Expression: An Mental Symphony within **Sonnys Blues Study Guide**

In a global consumed by displays and the ceaseless chatter of instantaneous conversation, the melodic splendor and emotional symphony created by the published term frequently fade in to the backdrop, eclipsed by the persistent noise and disturbances that permeate our lives. However, nestled within the pages of **Sonnys Blues Study Guide** a stunning fictional value brimming with natural emotions, lies an immersive symphony waiting to be embraced. Constructed by an outstanding composer of language, this charming masterpiece conducts visitors on a psychological trip, skillfully unraveling the hidden tunes and profound influence resonating within each cautiously constructed phrase. Within the depths of this touching review, we shall explore the book is key harmonies, analyze their enthralling writing style, and surrender ourselves to the profound resonance that echoes in the depths of readers souls.

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