



## Paideia Seminar Lesson Plan



Text:

**Theme for English B**, by Langston Hughes

Grade/Subject

MS / ELA



Ideas, Values:

Truth, Perspective, Language



Pre-Seminar Content



Launch Activity:

Have students imagine they are going to write a page about what is true about themselves, and consider what they would say. Allow 3-4 minutes to jot down some notes.



Inspectional Read:

Distribute the text, and ask students what they imagine it will be like to read this text. Point out the stanzas including the one in italics. Read the poem aloud. Have students number the sentences (1-24). Read the poem a second time aloud.

## Background Information:

Share that the poet Langston Hughes was born in the south in 1902 and moved north as a teenager. He lived in New York City and was part of the Harlem Renaissance.  
Note: this poem is *not* autobiographical.

## Vocabulary:

Spend time clarifying the meanings of the following terms, as well as any others that may be unfamiliar to participants: *page, thesis, opinion piece, essay.*

## Analytical Read:

Have participants read the poem a third time and note three phrases that they find most revealing.



## Pre-Seminar Process

-  Define and state purpose for Paideia Seminar.
-  Describe the responsibilities of facilitator and participants.
-  Have participants set a Personal Goal.
-  Agree on a Group Goal.

## Seminar Questions

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*Opening (Identify main ideas from the text.):*

- ❖ What do you think the speaker of this poem would say is the most important word or phrase? (round-robin response)
- ❖ Why did you choose that word or phrase? (spontaneous discussion)

*Core (Analyze textual details.):*

- ❖ How does the speaker compare himself with his instructor?
- ❖ What does the line, “That’s American” suggest in the context of the poem?
- ❖ Why do you think that Hughes chose to write his theme of 24 sentences into verse?
- ❖ What does this poem say about the relationship of black to white?

*Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas.):*

- ❖ What feeling does this poem leave you with? (How does the word choice and arrangement affect the way it makes you feel?)

## Post-Seminar Process

- ★ Have participants do a written self-assessment of their personal participation goal.
- ★ Do a group assessment of the social and intellectual goals of seminar.
- ★ Note reminders for next seminar.



## Post-Seminar Content

### Transition to Writing:

Ask students to take a few minutes to write down any key ideas you have heard, read or thought during our seminar.

### Writing Task:

After reading Langston Hughes' *Theme for English B* and our discussion, write a page about you that comes out of you. Begin with a question about yourself that you would like to answer. Divide this page into four parts.

(LDC Task#: 22 )



### Brainstorm:

Have students in partner groups to discuss what the writing task is asking, and share ideas about how they will respond.

### Structure the Writing:

Ask students to note ideas for each of the 2-4 sections for this 'page'. What will those be?

### First Draft:

Challenge all to create a draft of the sentences for their page, and ask them as well as they can, to arrange their sentences into verse.

 Collaborative Revision:

Once the first draft is complete, have participants work in pairs to read their work aloud, with emphasis on the reader as creator and editor. The listener says back one thing heard clearly, and asks a question. Switch roles. Provide time for revisions resulting in a second draft.

 Edit:

Once the second draft is complete, have participants work in groups of three or four and take turns reading each other's second drafts slowly and silently, marking for spelling and grammar errors, with a 5-10 mark limit. (Have dictionaries and grammar handbooks available for reference.) Take this opportunity to clarify/reteach any specific strategies you have identified your students may need. Give time for full revisions and editing, resulting in a third and final draft.

 Publish:

Publish (either virtually or on paper) the final copies of the resulting letters in a collection to be shared.

*This Paideia Lesson Plan was created by:*

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*Organization:* National Paideia Center



**THEME FOR ENGLISH B**  
**by Langston Hughes**

The instructor said,

*Go home and write  
a page tonight.  
And let that page come out of you—  
Then, it will be true.*

I wonder if it's that simple?

I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem.

I went to school there, then Durham, then here  
to this college on the hill above Harlem.

I am the only colored student in my class.

The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem,  
through a park, then I cross St. Nicholas,  
Eighth Avenue, Seventh, and I come to the Y,  
the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator  
up to my room, sit down, and write this page:

It's not easy to know what is true for you or me  
at twenty-two, my age. But I guess I'm what  
I feel and see and hear, Harlem, I hear you.  
hear you, hear me—we two—you, me, talk on this page.  
(I hear New York, too.) Me—who?

Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.  
I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.  
I like a pipe for a Christmas present,  
or records—Bessie, bop, or Bach.  
I guess being colored doesn't make me *not* like  
the same things other folks like who are other races.  
So will my page be colored that I write?  
Being me, it will not be white.  
But it will be

a part of you, instructor.  
You are white—  
yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.  
That's American.  
Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me.  
Nor do I often want to be a part of you.  
But we are, that's true!  
As I learn from you,  
I guess you learn from me—  
although you're older—and white—  
and somewhat more free.

This is my page for English B.