Dream Deferred Essay, Research Paper

Dream Deferred is a stimulating poem that addresses the possible consequences that could result from deferring a dream. The author explores what might happen through highly effective visual similes and metaphors. The importance of this short poem relates to the time it was written (1951) and the ethnic background of the author (African-American). A dream is synonymous to hope, desire, goal and fantasy–something that all African-Americans in 1951 had.

The speaker is the author himself and he addresses everyone. He describes a state of mind, exposing it through poetry. The author wants the reader to consider what feelings might result if a dream doesn t manifest, or if physical manifestation of a dream is delayed. These feelings could be even more significant if related to the hopes and dreams of the black community–a segment of the population whose dreams have been deferred since their ancestors were forced entrance into this country.

The poem consists of eleven lines, most of which culminate in questions. Since there are no definite answers provided as a response to these questions in the prose, the reader is stimulated to think about each possibility beginning with consideration of the powerful visceral imagery, then discovering behind each metaphor the way a dream deferred might overrun or affect all areas of one s life.

Several responses are given to the initial question: What happens to a dream deferred? (1), by introducing vivid similes and metaphors. Does it dry up (2), Like a raisin in the sun? (3)–perhaps describing how a dream becomes a mere remnant of itself when not put into action. Or fester like a sore– (4), And then run? ,–as pus would run from an infected sore to other parts of the body, so might the haunting of a deferred dream affect other parts of our psyche. Does it stink like rotten meat? (6),–reference to the regret and a sense of failure which might linger throughout life, as the stench of rotten meat would linger throughout a household. Or crust and sugar over– (7), like a syrupy sweet? ,–more hope is shown in this passage, to reflect a dream that has been deferred but could still be pursued and achieve if desired, although it would take some effort to get through the crust developed.

Maybe it just sags (9); like a heavy load. (10)–These are the most moving lines, written as statements, perhaps to hint at what most people would do with their deferred dreams. This would represent a burden that would sink to the depths of our spirit and be carried for life. Or does it explode? (11)–the most nebulous, yet most powerful question. What is it ? And what exactly does explode mean? The reader is left thinking of the frustrations that must be felt when a dream is deferred. It is the punch-line which turns this poem into a political statement.

In reality, a deferred dream can explode in anger and violence if not realized. Examples of these explosions are the 1960 s Watts Riots and the 1990 Los Angeles Riots. This short poem tastefully displays the disappointed feeling of a poet, who exposes deferred dreams as the reason for societal frustrations. Almost everything we have achieved individually or as a society was once a dream. Whenever things don t go as we want them to go, we can label them as deferred dreams, but every time the select few defer the rights and dreams of minorities we can label it social injustice.