

Struggle Against Intolerance Unit

Directions: Read the poem carefully and respond to the questions in the literature section of your notebook.

Southern Cop

*Let us forgive Ty Kendricks.
The place was Darktown. He was young.
His nerves were jittery. The day was hot.
The Negro ran out of the alley.
And so Ty shot.*

5

*Let us understand Ty Kendricks.
The Negro must have been dangerous,
Because he ran;
And here was a rookie with a chance
To prove himself a man.*

10

*Let us condone Ty Kendricks
If we cannot decorate.
When he found what the Negro was running for,
It was too late;
And all we can say for the Negro is
It was unfortunate.*

15

*Let us pity Ty Kendricks.
He has been through enough,
Standing there, his big gun smoking,
Rabbit-scared, alone,
Having to hear the wenches wail
And the dying Negro moan.*

20

--Sterling A Brown (1901-1989)

1. Explain the poem in terms of irony and understatement. In other words, what instances of irony and understatement appear in the poem and what is the effect of each example? Trace the slight changes in the irony from stanza to stanza.
2. What does the use of parallelism add to the poem?
3. What explanation can you provide for the police officer being named but not his victim?
4. What is the significance of the juxtaposition of the two images in the final stanza: "big gun smoking" and "Rabbit-scared, alone"?
5. What is the significance of the final line / word?
6. Does the poem create any sympathy for Ty Kendricks? Explain.
7. What is the purpose / overall meaning of the poem?