



## Black and white people on the opposite poles: an analysis with reference to the *White Man's Burden* and the *Black Man's Burden*

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### Abstract:

The study probes into the binary opposites of white imperialism and anti-imperialism in the poems of Rudyard Kipling's *White Man's Burden* and H. T. Johnson's *Black Man's Burden: A Response to Kipling*. This research study highlights how these binary opposites generated the ideology of white men's burden to civilise the uncivilised and subsequently affected black and non-white people. It clearly shows that the white people considered non-white people as very low background creatures, and they did not have the right to live in a way where the white people were living. They were considered like people who needed to be civilised only by the white people, and no one else could do this. However, on the other hand, non-white people also consider that they are the same human and that white people have ruined their lives; otherwise, they are more civilised and more cultured. Therefore, this mentality shows that their way of thinking does not conform with each other's. That's why we have tried to apply the theory of binary opposite, and the study findings show clearly the binary opposition the whites and blacks have very opposite connections regarding their life, culture, and ruling the people.

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## 1. Introduction

Literary binary opposition is a framework for examining social and individual distinctions, such as race, socioeconomic status, gender, and sexual orientation. Structuralism relies heavily on the idea of binary opposition. It has theoretical ramifications and connections to sociology, anthropology, and language studies. Understanding human culture requires learning how people interact and how society works. We frequently made observations about a society based on its established norms and practices. Innocuous enough as identifying labels, we create a false dichotomy when we assume one cannot exist without the other. The problem with seeing the world in terms of either/or pairs is that it fosters prejudice and discrimination. It's likely that both parties see the other as a danger, albeit for different reasons. Literary binary opposition is a paradigm for investigating societal and individual differences like as race, socioeconomic class, gender, and sexual orientation. Imperialism and anti-imperialism are diametrically opposed and cannot coexist. The term "White Man's Burden" first appeared in the late nineteenth century and was related to the notion that European nations had a moral and civilizing obligation to impart their superior culture and civilization to less developed cultures throughout the world. This ideology was frequently used to justify imperialism and colonialism, with Europeans portrayed as benign mentors bound to raise and educate apparently inferior races. The term "Black Man's Burden" refers to the hardships and problems that people of African ancestry suffer, particularly in the context of historical slavery, colonization, and systematic racism. It portrays the trials and tribulations faced by the black individuals and the communities because of the enslavement, the prejudice, and the socioeconomic inequity.

These words reflect deeply ingrained historical inequities and power relations among ethnic groupings. The term "White Man's Burden" implies a paternalistic mentality with a sense of obligation and superiority, whereas "Black Man's Burden" emphasizes the hardships and responsibilities put on underprivileged people by historical injustices (Brenner, 2006). The burden of black males is the polar opposite of that of white men. In contrast, black men hold the view that we are superior to white men, suggesting that white men have a moral obligation to civilize blacks. Poet Joseph Rudyard Kipling writes in his poem "white men burden" that white people are the superior race and will show the rest of the world how to be civilized. Kipling thought the British Empire would keep the pagans at peace, keep them strong, and provide them with a fair system of justice. Kipling composed the poem just after the Spanish-American War when the United States had just taken control of the Philippines. The African American nobleman and the renowned editor Johnson penned a poem of his own in reaction to the Kipling's poem *The White Man's Burden*, in which he criticized the Kipling poem's worldview. H. T. Johnson, on the other hand, was completely against the supremacy of the British and the Americans and, hence, was not in favour of the growth of the imperialism around the world. He thought that the non-white people could run their own countries just well and didn't need the British or the Americans to dominate us to improve our lives. In his poem, Kipling explains:

No tawdry rule of kings  
But toil of serf and sweeper

These lines show us the mentality of the Kipling. On the other hand, H. T Johnson was in the opposite favour:

And will take up the browns  
In vain, ye seek to end it  
With bullets blood or death.

If we look towards these poems, it shows clearly the binary opposition the whites and blacks have very opposite connections regarding their life, culture, and ruling the people.

Poet Joseph Rudyard Kipling titled his poem "The White Man's Burden" with a pro-American territorial expansion stance. Throughout the poem, it becomes clear that white folks are the only hope for the world's barbarians. In retaliation, African American poet H. T. Johnson penned a piece titled "The Black Man's Burden," in which he assumes that black people have been discriminated against and segregated for millennia.

Throughout history, imperialism and anti-imperialism movements were at their peak, and they are going on opposite pools. One considers himself superior, while the other is also striving to be equal, if not superior. The white men believed that imperialism was the only way to maintain peace and stability in non-white areas, while the blacks urged that imperialism is that which can create a civil war, bloodshed, terror, and killing of innocent people. The study focuses on the problems that are created by this binary opposition between the black people and the white people.

The research question for the study is, how do Kipling and Johnson represent imperialism in The White Man's Burden and Black Man's Burden? The objective of the study is to highlight and analyse white men, alluding to The White Man's Burden and to highlight and analyse black men alluding to The Black Man's Burden.

The outcome of this study affects society and enables us to understand what is better for them, imperialism or anti-imperialism. Throughout history, it has been a burning issue, and many people have lost their lives in these campaigns against each other. Both sides are considering their nation superior this study will help to understand the difference and a suitable solution for this endless war between the blacks and whites.

This research will mainly focus on Kipling's poem The White Man's Burden and the response to Kipling's poem by H.T Johnson, The Black Man Burden, and the study is restricted to binary opposition, which is present in both poems. Also got help from the web, journals, articles, and papers.

## 2. Literature review

This section of the study explores the works which have been done on the poems of Kipling- White Man's Burden, and H.T Johnson- Black Man's Burden. These poems have been opined by many critics' journalists and researchers. the approach of this study to the mentioned poems from different views. With the issue of imperialism and anti-imperialism which existed throughout history and struggled in opposition. Despite its practical existence, literature could not remain resistant to these changes, especially since imperialism affected the world's fiction. Many novelists and writers reflected on the issue in their writings.

Brantlinger (2007) argues that "The Brown Man's Burden bears witness to, farces and references started to show up very quickly." (Brantlinger, 2007) "The Black Man's Burden" was the title of numerous satires and more genuine sonnets in the African-American press. While the Philippines was yet an American settlement, Edmund Morel's 1920 book *The Black Man's Burden* stood Kipling's message on its head by contending the argument against the domain, and different works with comparative titles reprimanded bigotry in the U.S. between the World Wars" (Brantlinger, 2007).

In the article *Supremacist Internet Cultures*" "The White Man's Burden: Replication and Adaptation in Twenty-First Century White by Laura (Jeffries, 2018), Rudyard Kipling's 1899 poem "The White Man's Burden" Kipling was in favour of white supremacy in his poem, and he was involved in many arguments regarding the imperialism and white supremacy and it also some glimpse of racial segregation. Many people admire and follow "Senator Ben Tillman", who said that it is racial segregation and white supremacy. On the other hand, many people named that as new imperialism" (Jeffries, 2018).

Ndaks (2015) in his work argues that the "Racism is something we are observer to, in one way or the other. Do you realize that it has been a colossal issue for the black understudies attempting to oblige accepting their training? It has been characterized in English as partiality, separation, or enmity coordinated against somebody of an alternate race dependent on the conviction that one's race is prevalent. Prejudice in United States schools has been a major issue that must be tended to. Bigotry has a history, circumstances, and results on dark understudies" (Ndaks, 2015).

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, major European powers, along with the United States and Japan, engaged in imperialistic endeavours that reshaped global politics and economics. The motives behind imperialism varied, encompassing economic interests, strategic advantages, and a sense of national prestige. Economic factors, such as the quest for new markets and resources, played a crucial role, driving nations to establish colonies to secure raw materials and outlets for manufactured goods. Strategic considerations also fuelled imperialism, as nations sought geopolitical advantages and military bases. The scramble for Africa, the colonization of Southeast Asia, and the carving up of the Ottoman Empire

exemplify the geographical scope of imperialism. However, imperialism was not without repercussions; it frequently resulted in the exploitation of indigenous populations, cultural disputes, and geopolitical tensions between imperial countries. The effects of imperialism continue to reverberate in current world politics, influencing the geopolitical landscape (Kaye, 2021).

Anti-imperialism includes the protection of national sovereignty and self-determination. Imperial powers frequently imposed arbitrary borders on colonized nations and areas, undermining established sociopolitical institutions and fuelling internal conflict. Anti-imperialists contended that nations had an intrinsic right to decide their own destiny, free of external influence or control. The notion of self-determination became a rallying cry for anti-imperialist movements across the world (Radosh & Davis, 1964).

Furthermore, anti-imperialism sometimes coincided with nationalist movements demanding independence from colonial control. In Africa and Asia, colonial peoples revolted against imperial powers, seeking the restoration of their cultural legacy, political sovereignty, and control over their resources. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi in India and Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana became legendary figures in the battle against imperialism, preaching nonviolent resistance and national freedom (Harrington, 1937). Economic exploitation was another target of anti-imperialist criticism. Imperial nations justified their expansion by emphasizing economic reasons, such as the need for new markets, raw supplies, and investment possibilities. However, anti-imperialists said that these economic aspirations frequently led in the exploitation of the indigenous communities, with resources diverted to enrich the colonial powers at the cost of the colonized. This economic dimension of the anti-imperialism was consistent with the larger criticisms of capitalism and uneven global economic arrangements (Whittaker, 1969).

The anti-imperialist viewpoint was expressed in a variety of ways, including intellectual debate, political groups, and violent resistance. Anti-imperialist philosophers and activists questioned imperial countries' moral grounds, including concepts of cultural superiority and the "white man's burden." Edward Said's landmark book "Orientalism" analysed Western portrayals of the East, showing the prejudices and stereotypes fostered by colonial ideology. Anti-imperialist sentiments were not limited to colonial countries; they also found resonance among the imperial powers themselves. Some people in these countries, frequently motivated by the humanism and the anti-colonial ideals, joined the anti-imperialist movement, opposing their own governments' expansionist intentions (McGregor, 2013). The Boer War in South Africa, for example, sparked anti-imperialist feelings among some elements of the British populace, indicating a growing understanding of the ethical quandaries connected with the imperialistic efforts.

The end of World War I represented a profound shift in the global geopolitical environment, escalating anti-imperialist sentiments. The battle had major implications, challenging colonial

countries' assumed invincibility and showing the flaws within their rhetoric of promoting democracy and freedom (Starr, 2004) The Treaty of Versailles, which ended the war, increased aspirations for self-determination, but these expectations were frequently not satisfied, resulting to disillusionment and fuelling anti-imperialist sentiments. The interwar period saw the rise of anti-colonial groups and a reassessment of imperial power (Pettersson, 2014). In India, the battle for independence gained traction under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and other nationalists, eventually contributing to the downfall of the British Raj. Similarly, in the Middle East, the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the ensuing mandates system inflamed anti-imperialist sentiments, setting the framework for the formation of sovereign states (Mariátegui, 1929). World War II accelerated the collapse of colonial empires, as imperial nations weakened and were challenged by nationalist forces. The conflict also revealed colonial powers' hypocrisy, as they claimed to fight for freedom and democracy while oppressing colonized peoples' ambitions. Postwar decolonization witnessed the formation of new states in Africa and Asia, reflecting the victory of anti-imperialist efforts (Harrington, 1935). The Cold War era added a degree of complexity to anti-imperialist dynamics, as the US and the Soviet Union competed for influence in the decolonizing world. Superpowers frequently supported governments that served their interests, resulting in anti-imperialist movements being enmeshed in larger geopolitical confrontations. Despite this, the anti-imperialist ideology continued to impact the global narratives, with leaders like Gamal Abdel Nasser in the Egypt and Ho Chi Minh in the Vietnam representing the spirit of opposition to foreign dominance (Feuer, 1989).

As global power dynamics shifted after the Cold War, anti-imperialism took on new dimensions. While conventional forms of imperialism, typified by outright colonialism, declined, opponents said that neo-colonialist institutions remained in the form of economic exploitation, uneven trade ties, and geopolitical supremacy by powerful states. Organizations and organizations pushing for global justice, human rights, and economic equality used anti-imperialist concepts to confront these ongoing disparities. Anti-imperialism is relevant in the twenty-first century, addressing a variety of global challenges. Critics of military interventions, economic globalization, and cultural hegemony often draw on anti-imperialist frameworks to highlight the ways in which powerful nations exert influence over weaker ones. Debates surrounding issues such as humanitarian interventions, trade agreements, and the role of international institutions reflect ongoing tensions between imperialist and anti-imperialist perspectives (Said, 2012).

In the article “Imperialism in Africa British Imperialism in Africa” by Teegal Nare, he said that “England's apathetic partner got engaged with Africa for various reasons, generally to serve their advantages. The British were probably the most abolitionist servitude Protestants the world had to bring to the table and felt ethically obliged to stop the Swahili slave exchange. This, however, would not have been sufficient to get British officers on the terrain of Africa, it was just enough to consider going all in. The Suez Canal and South Africa uplifted British intrigue since they had all the earmarks of being two monetarily useful chances. The British

just got associated with Egypt automatically to ensure their advantages, fundamentally the Suez Canal” (Nare).

In this research “*Racing White Instructors: Beyond the Black-White Binary*,” Edith said that “I need to begin by arranging myself and giving per-users setting about my point of view. To start with, I am a grown-up teacher with a variety of personalities: Indian lady, Malaysian, post-colonial woman's activist, educator, American, Christian, and so forth. Second, I racially distinguish as South Asian American. As a South Asian American, I am not white, but neither am I generally and socially dark”, so I don't see myself in the dark white parallel worldview of race. At last, this evaluation is made from a U.S.-driven viewpoint on race” (Gnanadass, 2019). In the article “*Moving beyond (and back to) the black-white binary: a study of black and white Muslims' racial positioning in the United States*,” Atiya Husain said that Muslim rationalization writing contends that another rationalized bunch developed after 9/11, however, doesn't inspect how this gathering is situated comparatively with US dark white parallel racial rationale. Many contend that to get Muslims, we should move our investigation "past highly contrasting". “Writing on the dark white parallel, then again, offers a significant hypothesis for the examination of racial structures, yet doesn't frequently look at the job religion plays in these structures. My task utilizes and fills holes in these two literary works by looking at how high contrast Muslims are situated comparatively with US dark white racial rationale. Breaking down ethnographic information, I locate that highly contrasting Muslims are situated as either dark/white or as Muslim. This recommends Muslim and religion all the more, by and large, shapes the development and attribution of darkness and whiteness” (Husain, 2017).

In the research “*First World War and Imperialism*” by Jacques Pauwels (2019) said that imperialism is an overall extension of private enterprise, persuaded by the desire for crude materials, for example, oil, markets, and modest work, including furious rivalry among extraordinary powers, for example, the British Empire, czarist Russia, and the German Reich, and accordingly prompted the Great War of 1914–1918, later to be known as the First World War or World War I. The First World War was the result of the nineteenth century, a "long century" from the perspective of certain history specialists, enduring from 1789 to 1914. It was described by the transformations of a political, social, and monetary nature, particularly the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, and finished with the rise of imperialism, which is another overall indication of the free enterprise initially a European wonder (Pauwels, 2019).

### **3. Theoretical framework and research methodology**

In the theoretical structure of this investigation, there is a consideration of a theory which will help in noting the difficult definition. By basic methodology, in the investigation, there is a theory of "binary opposites" that can help in the examination of the poems to the different methodology. This study employs a descriptive qualitative methodology. The study's primary data comes from in-depth textual research, while secondary data comes from a variety of online

and print publications. Throughout human history, writers have addressed the problem of imperialism and anti-imperialism, both directly and indirectly.

Qualitative research is a method of inquiry used in a wide range of academic disciplines, most notably the social and behavioural sciences. This methodological framework is quite broad, including a wide variety of different types of exploratory techniques. Subjective investigation could have a different goal than the underlying academic field. The evaluation process often requires the use of qualitative methods. It consists of a centralized meeting, a top-down meeting, and an audit of various archives. Research conducted meetings, gathered opinions, and conducted audits of records or archives to ensure accuracy. Qualitative studies have a more organic feel. It considers the fact that we live in the world as it is right now. In this method, the researcher is free to analyse any data he comes across in preparation for his study. He will be free of restrictions.

This research focuses on two poems: "The White Man's Burden" and "The Black Man's Burden." Rudyard Kipling and Johnson are the poets. Despite the fact that Kipling's and H.T. Johnson's poetry has been thoroughly dissected, researched, and investigated from a wide variety of views, the authors of this study are a white man and a black man, who represent the polar opposites of the art world. This study's opposite-side focus on two conceptual individuals and their output is what makes it so interesting. The text will be parsed for clues concerning the researcher's chosen areas of discussion for both artists. Important works have been selected for this purpose, so that they may be thought about and viewed from new angles. The most important points were covered or explored last. Analysis of texts via the lens of language, symbols, and/or images can shed light on how people make sense of and share their experiences with the world. Communication can be understood by a variety of indications provided by visual, textual, or verbal information.

#### **4. Discussion and analysis of the imperialism and anti-imperialism**

This research paper explores the issues of imperialism and anti-imperialism in the poems of Rudyard Kipling and H.T. Johnson (White Man's Burden and Black Man's Burden). The issues have existed throughout history, and the poets also discussed them. The study reflects the dominance of white people and the suppression of black people and their aggressive response to imperialism. The project investigates the presentation of the imperialism and the anti-imperialism in the poems.

"Take up the White Man's burden  
Send forth the best ye breed"

The burden is used in the sense that the white people are the superior and the most civilized nation in the world, and they have the responsibility to civilize the world. According to imperialism, only white people have the right to rule the world and they have the guts to civilize

the world. Kipling addressed the people (thought to be individuals recognised as "white") to play out a troublesome undertaking allotted to them by the excellence of their whiteness. Most of the people who were in great positions at that time admired the poem of Kipling, which was a total of the imperialist views. One of them is "Hon. Benjamin R. Tillman, U.S. Senator" he was addressing his fellows in the U.S. Senate he said. "It was a burden upon our manhood and our ideas of liberty before they were emancipated. It is still a burden, although they have been granted the franchise. It clings to us like the shirt of Nessus, and we are not responsible because we inherited it, and your fathers, as well as ours, are responsible for the presence amongst us of those people. Why do we as a people want to incorporate into our citizenship ten million more of different or of differing races, three or four of them" (Engel, 2023). While H. T. Johnson replied to the Kipling in his poem the Black Man's Burden: A response to Kipling in a way:

"Pile on the Black man's burden  
Tis nearest at your door"

The poet replied in a way that the imperialism is an act of racism while expressing his views and feelings about the racism that the black people had been suppressed or deprived of their basic rights. And the white people have taken their territory without their well. The great black leaders also mentioned this issue of racism and raised voices against the white imperialism, as harried Tubman said,

"I grew up like a neglected weed – ignorant of liberty, having no experience  
of it." (Medrut, 2018)

As it is clear from the above quote white imperialism or supremacy was against the suppressed black people it was against the motive of white imperialism to civilize the non-white people, while white people were responsible for the terror and fear in black people:

No iron rule of kings  
But toil of serf and sweeper"

These lines also indicate imperialism. He said that imperialism is far better than the traditional rule of kings and queens in their areas, and this is moral work. The white people can maintain peace and stability in their areas because the white people will come towards light and modernism. On the other hand, the traditional kings and queens will not improve their lives because they cannot do so. In that context, the American governor of New York Chicago, Illinois, reflects the issue of imperialism he said. "I wish to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease, but the doctrine of the strenuous life, the life of toil and effort, of labour and strife; to preach that highest form of success which comes, not to the man who desires mere easy peace, but to the man who does not shrink from danger, from hardship, or bitter toil, and who out of these wins the splendid ultimate triumph" (Roosevelt, 1899).

As this speech attributes towards imperialism, it shows us the Americans are purely imperialistic and they are working for the expansion of imperialism. Most of the great leaders and administrators are singing the songs of imperialism. They are those people who believed that imperialism is the only key to civilize the world (Amin, 2017).

On the other hand, the poet which is from the black people H.T Johnson he believed that imperialism is the worst thing for the people who belong to the non-white community. As Johnson stated in his poem,

“You’ve sealed the red Man’s problem  
And will take up the Brown,  
In vain, ye seek to end it,  
With bullets blood or death”

White men believed that we were superior by religion, culture, and politics. The whites also considered themselves as they are the modern and civilized nation in all aspects of life. White people considered it their moral duty to civilize the non-white people, but Johnson ironically used that white people have solved the problems and difficulties faced by black Americans, and now their interest is built up in South Asia, but this is all in vain (Johnson, 2002). All the time, they were suppressed by the whites, and they did what they wanted. The black people had no representation, but the white people considered the blacks as uncivilized people, so because of that when they considered the black uncivilized how, they could give the blacks a proper lifestyle. If we observe things deeply, it shows a glimpse of binary opposites of what the whites believe.

On the other hand, what do black people think? Firstly, we discussed Kipling’s poems and the response to Kipling's poem of H.T Johnson, which clearly shows us the binary opposite of white imperialism. In these poems, Kipling argues that white people are the only ones who can change the fate of the world through imperialism. On the other hand, Johnson responded that we are suppressed by the white people, and they have clinched our representation in the world. They are ruling on us not according to our well but for their interest.

As Kipling stated in the poem:

“The savage wars of peace  
Fill full the mouth of Famine  
And bid the sickness cease;  
And when your goal is nearest  
The end for others sought”

The poet Kipling again went on the track of imperialism and considered imperialism as the most useful and suitable way of ruling the people who belong to non-white communities. In

these lines, he is addressing his people that white people should take part in brutal wars against the enemies and these wars will be full of bloodshed for the sake of those people who are dying from famines in their areas the white people will provide food and shelter and also the white will fight against the diseases which were spread in the areas under the non-white people (Mommsen, 1982). Kipling believed that all these fights and struggles would be for the sake of others, not for white people, because he believed that non-white people are lazy and foolish. They can do nothing for that purpose. The whites will fight for the sake of those people. In that sense, the American politician John Quincy Adams said that,

“America... goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is a well-wisher of the freedom and independence of all.” (6<sup>th</sup> US President)

This quote clearly shows the love of the American people towards imperialism, and they were in a space where nobody could rule the world without white people. On the other hand, Johnson, or other black people responded to them with their own view of about the imperialism. In his poem, Johnson stated that:

“Halt ye your fearless armies,  
Which menace feeble folks  
Who fight with clubs and arrows  
And brook your rifle's smoke”

Imperialism is considered evil by black people. The black people are suppressed by the whites from the past centuries, and they are treated like barbarians. Black people believe that we are in favour of white imperialism because it leads to white supremacy, and because of that supremacy, we will be suppressed. Imperialism is the thing in which the black people or non-white were deprived of their basic rights but on the other hand, the white people believed that we are the people who can teach the world how to live an ideal and civilized life. As “Paul Robeson” said “, I do not hesitate one second to state clearly and unmistakably: I belong to the American resistance movement which fights against American imperialism, just as the resistance movement fought against Hitler” (McKay, 2021).

These lines show us the anti-imperialistic views of the non-white people. Most of the non-white people are against white imperialism, and they are openly against white supremacy. The fight between black and white is from the past centuries both are thinking opposite from each other the white people think that we are the only ones who can make this world modern and civilized by ruling the non-white people on the hand, the black people are considering the white rule is suppression for themselves they argue that we are restrained from our basic rights centuries ago they treat the black people like slaves for their interest they now have no concern with our welfare but only working for their economic, social, cultural and military benefits. This theory implies the binary opposition between them.

## 5. Conclusion

Throughout history, the conflict between black and white people has been for centuries. Both sides are thinking about the different perspectives of the white people on the side of expansionism while the blacks are totally against them; they are in favour of their representation and a life full of self-respect. It is a fact that the black or non-white people were deprived of their basic rights from past centuries while the imperialists claimed that we are working for the betterment of the non-white people, and every time, the black people oppose that point of view of white people. This conflict shows the binary opposite because both are on opposite sides of the pool. Their thinking, their goals, and their tradition are opposite to each other.

This problem is not contemporary. It is a life-lasting problem for humans. The recent incidents in America again burned the flame of chaos and turmoil. Both sides are going to extreme levels, and because of that, many people have lost their lives from both sides it is because of small-mindedness. The permanent solution to this problem is to make a balance between law and order. Another thing is to create an environment of self-respect and tolerance. Because of these things, the light of peace and stability will be flashed. This research will help to clear the boundaries between white and black or non-white people. Everyone has his own domain, and this research will clarify the difference between black and white people. This project revolves around the specific domains of black and white people, and because of that, the reader will clearly indicate the difference between the two communities.

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