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### An Analysis of "Salvation"

"Salvation" was written by Langston Hughes. The essay recounts the story of Hughes's loss of faith. Hughes, who is "going on thirteen" at the time, attends a church revival with his Auntie Reed (1). He literally expects to *see* Jesus at the revival because the adults in his life have told him that he will *see* Jesus. Eventually Hughes and Westley are the only two boys left on the "mourners' bench" (7). Westley, tired and frustrated, lies and is saved, leaving Hughes alone on the bench. Hughes suffers a range of emotions, but he ultimately lies and says he sees Jesus. The "waves of rejoicing" deeply affect him and he cries alone in bed that night for the last time in his life (13). Hughes wrote "Salvation" using the expressive purpose and the narration pattern. → 

135 words
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"Salvation" demonstrates expressive writing because it reveals **values, emotion, self-definition, and subjective language.** In paragraph two, Hughes expresses the **values** of trust and respect for his elders. He literally believes he will see Jesus because he heard his aunt and "a great many old people" explain that Jesus would come to him. He said, "It seemed to me they ought to know." He also expresses the **value** of honesty. In paragraph fifteen Hughes reveals the pain he feels for lying about seeing Jesus. He stated, "I was really crying because I couldn't bear to tell her that I had lied, that I had deceived everybody in the church" (15). In addition, the essay is rife with **emotion**. Hughes uses three exclamation marks in paragraph two to emphasize his literal belief that he will see Jesus. In paragraph eleven he becomes "ashamed" of himself for making the congregation wait in the hot and crowded church for him to be saved. In the

conclusion he struggles with his **emotions** because he can't "bear" telling his aunt that he had lied (15). He stated, "I cried. I cried, in bed alone, and couldn't stop. I buried my head under the quilts" (15). Along with values and emotion, Hughes expresses **self-definition**. In the first paragraph he states that he is a sinner. In the final paragraph he defines himself as a nonbeliever: "Now I didn't believe there was a Jesus any more, since he didn't come to help me" (15). He also **defines** himself as a calm and thoughtful child. In paragraph two he explains that he sat "calmly in the hot, crowded church, waiting for Jesus." In paragraph five he states, "Still I kept waiting to *see* Jesus." Then Westley curses and lies and leaves Hughes sitting alone on the "mourner's bench" and his aunt is on her knees in tears and the entire congregation is praying for Hughes "in a mighty wail of moans" (7). Yet Hughes responded to the chaos by stating, "And I kept waiting serenely for Jesus, waiting, waiting—but he didn't come" (7). Finally, **subjective language**, the informal language of conversation, is used throughout. He refers to his "Auntie Reed" instead of his Aunt Reed, which demonstrates informality (1). He also quotes Westley's profanity and abbreviated wording: "Goddamn! I'm tired o' sitting here. Let's get up and be saved" (6). Finally, the personal pronoun "I" is used throughout. → 400 words

"Salvation" uses narration as its pattern of organization. The story is told in chronological order. The story moves from what happened weeks before the revival to what happened when Hughes arrived home. In the first paragraph the "young sinners" are "escorted to the front row and placed on the mourners' bench" (1). Hughes's use of the words "sinners" and "mourners" causes the reader to identify that there is a problem. The "sinners" are asked to come to the front of the church to be with Jesus, but most of the children continue to remain seated on the "mourners' bench" and the girls cry as they sit there. As the children move to the front to be with Jesus, **conflicts** begin for Hughes as he continues to sit on the bench waiting to

*see* Jesus. There is an inner struggle. At first he calmly waits to *see* Jesus. Then he begins to be “ashamed” of himself for making the congregation wait for him (11). The **crisis** occurs when Hughes is the only one left on the bench and his aunt is kneeling before him crying and praying for him to get up and see Jesus. The reader is left to wonder what he will do. The **resolution** occurs when Hughes decides to get up and be saved. Hughes said, “The whole room broke into a sea of shouting, as they saw me rise. Waves of rejoicing swept the place” (13). The story is fully resolved when Hughes describes himself weeping in bed that night because he is upset about his deception and now doesn’t believe in Jesus any more “since he didn’t come to help me” (15). → 275 words

This story by Langston Hughes effectively incorporated many of the expressive elements of writing, and it follows the narration pattern because it is told in chronological order. His writing is so vivid that the readers can picture what was happening in the church, in his bed when he cried, and within him. In addition, he has effectively shown how strongly an adult’s words can influence a child. This story should be a warning to all adults to how they talk to children. I enjoyed the reading because of its strong emotion and its honesty. It made me reflect on some childhood experiences where I revered the adults in my life. → 110 words

920 words total