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Drown, Discourse Community Project

Essay # 1

In Junot Diaz's novel *Drown*, the character Yunior is the main focus throughout the book's storyline. Diaz creates a setting of a struggling Dominican Republic, where Yunior battle through several hardships in his childhood and results in him being influenced in illegal activities. Yunior's story starts with his introduction to his brother Rafa and his mother with his father that left their family to find a better life in America. Yunior's relationship with his mother is very brief but, Yunior thinks like his mother more than his father because of his childhood, he grew up with a motherly figure. Yunior's mother was often working in the chocolate factory and was unable to be with his mother. Throughout the novel, we as readers start to see a relationship that can be identified. Yunior loves his mother more than anything and will do anything to see her smile. Diaz focuses on the point of view of Yunior, watching his mother grow from a weak woman to someone that is stronger than every character in the novel. This piece of the novel shows the transformation of a real woman that Yunior sees "Mami looked really nice that day. The United States had finally put some meat on her; she was no longer the same flaca who had arrived here three years before. She had cut her hair short and was wearing tons of cheap-ass jewelry which on her didn't look too lousy. She smelled like herself, like the wind through a tree" (Diaz,31). Diaz emphasizes how the mother can be so strong by herself and how the United

States molded her into an ideal mother to Yuniór's eyes. Díaz also expresses the influences of others upon the characters, before the party Yuniór's mother was very anxious and was very strict with Yuniór and his siblings. His mother said that her perfume must be used right before the party because it will be a waste to spray it once again, his mother wanted to have a good time at the party and dance the night away. This detail emphasizes to readers that Yuniór's mother has stressed throughout her whole life and wants to feel happy for once and not worry about work, her kids, or her husband. Throughout *Fiesta*, 1980 Díaz implements a piece of key information about Yuniór's Father unfaithfulness to his family. Other than having already a bad taste of the father leaving the family to America he is also a cheater. He would bring Yuniór, Rafa, and their sister to a lady's house for a little bit and would spend about an hour or two there. Yuniór wanted to tell his mother the truth but was afraid of his father and his aggression. When Yuniór watched his Mami dancing with Papi, he wanted his mother to dump his father right on the spot and wanted her to say he was a cheater in front of everybody. However, Yuniór watched his mother dance with Papi and saw that she was happy she was smiling while dancing with his father. Díaz emphasizes how Yuniór's mother may be a strong woman when taking care of the family and working to keep the family together and happy to be under a roof. However, Díaz also emphasizes how the mother changes herself by bottling up all her emotions to stay happy and that happiness is influenced by the people around her, the mother also wants the best for her family even though it kills her inside to know that the person she trusted is worthless to be a husband.

Junot Díaz emphasizes the aspect of a masculine display by focusing on Yuniór's father. Yuniór's father is shown to be a very strong leading role in both Yuniór's and Rafa's childhood

where their father is a symbol of sex. Throughout the novel and throughout class emphasize the hairy nipple of the father. Masculinity is a huge part of this novel with Rafa being a bully to both Yunior and Ysrael, Rafa came more like his father and Yunior became more like his mother. In the novel, Diaz focuses on how his male leading characters treat women and how they are manly men. However, Diaz does not only mention physical feature being masculine but also how male character acts. Rafa is a very violent character and many people view violence as a strength, a way to express manhood. Rafa is the one brother that would violently bully his own brother because he was not as strong as he is and since he idealizes his father. Rafa as a child in the Dominican Republic attack and tormented Ysrael for being different. Ysrael, a sweet young boy that had his face snacked on by a pig when he was a baby bully by the whole town and forced to wear a mask until he was able to receive medical assistance. Rafa fascinated by Ysrael's true face, he egged on Yunior to shove him and throw a rock at his back. This escalated quickly where Rafa became impatient and decide to smash an empty bottle on Ysrael head. Another example of masculinity would be Yunior's father. The father played a big role in being a sexual beast to all the ladies, he is sleeping with other women and when he moved to America he manages to find a successful woman; marry her and was able to have her support him. The father can be depicted as a womanizer and with his hairy nipples, he is able to find women left and right. Finally, masculinity in *Drown* can be shown throughout the chapter of Aurora. Yunior became a drug dealer and became a partner with a character Cut, Cut was a womanizer too. Cut was known to have his way with women with his hairy hands, "Later I open my eyes and catch her kissing Cut. She's pumping her hips into him and he's got his hairy-ass hands in her hair."(Diaz, 55). This shows that because a man is hairy his ability to be a sex symbol throughout

the novel. Chapter Aurora, emphasizes another aspect of masculinity when it comes to the aspect of illegal drugs and illegal activities. When Yuniór became a drug dealer he had this client of his Aurora, he was quite interested in her and wanted to protect her. However, Aurora became more of a junkie and started to cling onto another guy to get high. The display of masculinity Diaz express is not only the obvious meaning but more of the traits of masculinity.

Yuniór grew up with many hardships and throughout ever hardship he had someone by his side. In his teenage druglord years, he had Cut by his side that always gave him advice. In *Drown*, Yuniór was best friends with a boy named Beto, his partner and crime where they would shoplift from stores, stealing at least three hundred dollars from these stores. The relationship between is more like brotherly love, a brother and an ideal that Yuniór also wanted in his life. The relationship was very loving and Beto started to develop homosexual feelings for Yuniór and start to advance onto him, Yuniór was confused and pushed Beto away from him and did not understand what was going on. When passing a local gay bar the two started to view the gay bar as disgusting and was uncomfortable seeing a place like that. The theme of sexuality is definitely present throughout the novel when the two boys encounter the old man that “help” Yuniór. The man started to pinch Yuniór’s pinga, this shows that Yuniór was not sexually driven to allow another man to touch his pinga. However, Beto was still very invested in Yuniór and tried to make a move on Yuniór one last time and Yuniór was not backing down. He allowed Beto to do things to him and made sure Yuniór was comfortable with everything going on. In the end, Yuniór leaves Beto because he was uncomfortable being friends with someone that is gay and refuses to have any relationship with Beto. Homosexuality is frowned upon and this is shown by the rejection from Yuniór and the inability to accept Beto for who he is.

Essay # 2

Every day people experience a discourse community that impacts someone's belief and perspective on life. In my discourse community, it allowed me to branch my network and share many relationships with others and these relationships allow my personal development. When lining up for clothing or sought-after items it allows me to interact with others in this community and helped me in speaking to others in a friendly manner. This community changed my language and this language and our habits are considered a mystery to many people. We would line up in the blistering cold to buy money to make money, the hyper the item the more profit that we make. Many people would create groups to find a way to cheat the system and allow part of the community to make the most money. Some example of the language in this community consists of "bot(scripted software)", "Cap (lying)", and many more. Every discourse community has its own language that everyone understands and it allows every member in the community to interact with others and progress to something greater. In this discourse, the community helped me improve my financial abilities and provide me with different discounts from newly developed friends. My community can be very similar to the one Diaz created where everyone has their own perspective on life and the community influences change actions. In the novel, Yuniors is influenced by his family, where he starts to understand the true intentions of his father and his friend but however still has to forgive and learn to be happy as his mother. The mother that bottles up all of her feelings and wants to live happily without the need to depend on others. The discourse community in *Drown*, the characters were more than just fiction backgrounds but more of the main character's intentions in life; where the mother symbolizes happiness, the father is manhood, Rafa is ignorance, Aurora is love, and Beto is sexual confusion. This is cant be

determined by the character's ability to only make his decisions based on the people he surrounds himself is the main reason why Diaz's novel expresses a raw description of how the human mind is molded so easily. Yunior's childhood changes how he thinks and how he views others and treats other characters based on his personal experiences and based on the ideals he looked up to.

Essay # 3

After reading *Drown*, this novel shows the importance of a person's origin is the most important thing to understand. We watched how Yunior became a man and throughout every obstacle, Yunior faced made him a better person in the end. Junot Diaz has many reasons for writing this novel and may have a specific audience he wanted to write it towards. Diaz's audience any or everyone that lived in a life of struggle, a people where there was nowhere to go but up, this can be determined by the growth the character experience, the struggling family that did not have enough for extra pencil and a mother that was raising three kids by herself to a family that moved to America from the Dominican Republic to a new world. A stepping stone to something greater every time. The raw unedited writing that Diaz portrays the struggles many can relate. Diaz's writing deeply influences the Dominican Republic immigrant community because it showcases the new life that someone can obtain by moving to the United States. However, this novel is not only written to the D.R. community but any immigrant community that views America as a yellow brick road to strive for greatness. Diaz speaks about the violent history of D.R. and how the country struggles and his writing is powerful which leads to him being a strong writer that is admired by all. His raw take on writing is something that many writers see as frowned upon but Diaz allows the readers to think after every sentence. Diaz is a

creative writer that focuses on the smallest detail in every short story, painting a picture in the reader's head and allowing the reader's thoughts to consume the passage. I strive to write like Diaz because his writing is something that people lack, a story that is based on the smallest detail but at the end of the story, there is a message that can not be answered. The writing that I prefer to write is story stories that have some comedy, to have the readers laugh and emphasize the small details to paint a picture. These stories many are useless and lack meaning, the story does not have to have a meaning but it focuses on the little things that people tend to overlook. Diaz's written brings meaning to the smallest details because it is raw, the relationships with every character to the way it is written. Diaz creates a plan of attack in his writing and that plan is to inject the reader with understanding one's self, and he definitely made that apparent to the readers.