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Jesmyn Ward's novel, Sing, Unburied Sing, is set in the fictional town of Bois Sauvage, near the Mississippi River delta, and ". . .stinks like possums or armadillos smashed half flat on the road, rotting in asphalt and heat. [...] It is the smell of death" (Ward 6). The novel reveals how past trauma and racism continue to affect families across generations
shown through Jojo's journey from childhood to understanding as he encounters both the living and the dead. The protagonists, Jojo, a thirteen-year-old boy from a mixed-race family, and his little sister Kayla, live with their maternal grandparents. Their grandmother, Mam, is dying of cancer, and their grandfather, Pop, is afflicted by memories of his
past, a past tied to the Parchman prison to the released. Leonie, the children and their mother set out to visit. Jojo's father, Michael, is serving a three-year sentence at this prison, soon to be released. Leonie, the children are hardly there, and a drug-addicted mother wants to take her children on a road trip up to Parchman prison to visit her husband. The novel's title,
 "Sing, Unburied, Sing," directly connects to its core themes of voice and memory. The word "Sing" appears as both a command and comfort, reflecting how characters use singing throughout the story - from Kayla's healing songs to the old prison work songs at Parchman. "Unburied" refers not just to the physical ghosts that appear but to the
unresolved traumas and memories that refuse to stay buried in the past. This title sets up the novel's exploration of how the past demands to be heard, remembered, and confronted. Save your time! We can take care of your essay Proper editing and formatting Free revision, title page, and bibliography Flexible prices and money-back guarantee Place
an order During this trip across the state, Jojo learns things about himself and the unjust, racist, and violent world from which his family has tried to hide him. As Richie puts it, "When I was thirteen, I knew much more than him. I knew that hunger
could hurt, could scoop me hollow as a gourd..." (Ward 185). Throughout the novel, this theme is present, Jojo has no comprehension of the true world, but the ghosts of the past do. Sing, Unburied Sing shows that suffering and injustice can never simply be confined to the past. They haunt the present and should never be forgotten or dismissed as
irrelevant. Family Relationships In the opening scene of the novel, it is Jojo's thirteenth birthday. Pop asks for his help outside, and Jojo says, "I follow Pop out the house, try to keep my back straight, my shoulders even as a hanger; that's how Pop walks. I try to look like this is normal and boring, so Pop will think I've earned these thirteen years. Pop
will know I'm ready to pull what needs to be pulled, separate innards from muscle and organs from cavities. I want Pop to know I can get bloody" (Ward 1). With an absent father figure and a mostly absent and drug-addicted mother, Jojo has built a strong relationship with his grandparents, calling them Mam and Pop instead of by their first names, as
he does with his mother. Jojo looks up to Pop and wants to show him that he is ready to be a real man, that he can look death in the face and not flinch. The stark contrast between Jojo's relationships with his grandparents and his mother reveals the complex nature of family trauma. While Mom and Dad provide stability through daily rituals and
instruction—Dad shows Jojo how to care for animals, and Mom teaches him about herbs—Leonie's' presence is marked by absence and unreliability. Her drug use isn't just an addiction; it's also her way of seeing Given's'Given's ghost: "When I'm high, it's like I'm climbing up to him" (Ward 153). This desperate attempt to connect with her dead brother
further distances her from her living children. When Leonie tries to be maternal, her efforts often backfire, like when she makes Jojo throw up by forcing him to eat before the car ride, showing how even her attempts at care become forms of harm. The way Jojo calls his grandparents "Mam" and "Pop" while referring to his mother as "Leonie" speaks
volumes about who truly serves as his parents. Pop knows that Jojo does not have the stomach for it, so he says that he thinks he heard Kayla cry out in the house. Jojo goes back and finds that Pop must've misheard, for Kayla was sound asleep. He swats a fly off Kayla's knee and remembers how Leonie used to tell him, "... flies eat shit" (Ward 7). Jojo
thinks back to that time with a sort of fondness but also contempt. He says, "That was when there was more good than bad when she'd sit next to me on the sofa and watch TV with me, rubbing my head. Before, she was more gone than here. Before, she
started snorting crushed pills. Before all the little mean things she told me gathered and godden like grit in a skinned knee. Back then, I still called Michael Pop. That was when he lived with us before he moved back in with Big Joseph. Before the police took him away three years ago, before Kayla was born" (Ward 7). Jojo is old enough to
recall such memories of the good times with his mother and father, and while he remembers the good with some fondness, he also can recall all the fighting between Michael and Leonie. He recalls the day Michael left. Jojo was still too young to understand the complexity of the situation, "How, at that moment, [he] didn't matter" (Ward 10-11).
Michael comes from a white and racist family. However, Michael himself is not racist, even having Jojo's name, Joseph, tattooed on him. Jojo doesn't understand the generational legacy of systemic racist, even having Joseph doesn't understand the generational legacy of systemic racist, even having Jojo's name, Joseph, tattooed on him. Jojo doesn't understand the generational legacy of systemic racist, even having Jojo's name, Joseph, tattooed on him. Jojo doesn't understand the generational legacy of systemic racist, even having Jojo's name, Joseph, tattooed on him. Jojo doesn't understand the generational legacy of systemic racist, even having Jojo's name, Joseph, tattooed on him. Jojo doesn't understand the generational legacy of systemic racist, even having Jojo's name, Joseph, tattooed on him. Jojo doesn't understand the generational legacy of systemic racist, even having Jojo's name, Jojo doesn't understand the generational legacy of systemic racist, even having Jojo's name, Jojo doesn't understand the generation and th
Big Joseph may not be physically violent, his racist cruelty still drives the family apart, pulling Michael away from his children. Racial Identity and Legacy Further along in the novel, we begin to see how Jojo and Kayla are perceived as black, rather than biracial, within Michael's family and within the public eye. This is a result of the legacy of the "one-
drop rule." This rule was a form of racial categorization developed under slavery, which stated that having just one black ancestor was all that was needed to be considered black. Slaveholders developed this rule in order to enslave the descendants of parents of different races. Big Joseph holds this ideology, and it is evident when Leonie, Michael,
Jojo, and Kayla show up at their house once Michael is released from prison. Big Joseph says, "Hell, they half of her. All bad blood. Fuck the skin" (Ward 207). He doesn't see that; it only sees black children of black women with whom his son has made the
mistake of having relations. The novel explores racial identity through everyday moments that reveal deeper systemic issues. When Michael's white cellmate treats Jojo with unexpected kindness, it highlights how rare such cross-racial interactions are in their community. Meanwhile, the prison system itself embodies institutional racism - Parchman's
evolution from a plantation to a prison shows how systems of racial control adapt rather than disappear. Even Michael'sof Jojo's nJojo'sars the weight of race because even though it was meant to be a gesture of love, it also marks his son like property on his skin, thereby unwittingly repeating the historical practice of marking enslaved people. The
details show that racism does not work only through manifest violence but through subtle and insistent patterns in every one of the characters' lives. Ward's use of sensory details connects personal experiences to historical" trauma. When Jojo des" ribes how "the little mean things" from Leonie "lodged like grit in a skinned knee" (Ward 7), it shows
how small wounds accumulate into lasting pain - much like how daily instances of racism build into systemic oppression. This pattern appears "ain when Pop describes "Parchman: "Worst come after death" (Ward 72). His words refer not just to ghosts but to how the prison's legacy continues to haunt contemporary society. The novel draws clear
parallels between historical Parchman, where Pop and Richie suffered, and the modern prison where Michael is held, suggesting that while the surface has changed, the underlying structures of racial oppression remain intact. These connections challenge readers to consider how past injustices continue to shape present-day institutions and
relationships. Throughout the entire novel, the past shines through into the present in many ways. The stories Pop tells Jojo about his traumatic past to Jojo, along with some Jojo's epain. This contributes to Jojo's identity and helps his transition from an
innocent child at the beginning to Mam'sult by the end of the novel. Mam's role as a spiritual healer bridges the physical and supernatural worlds in the novel. She uses traditional remedies passed down through generations, "brewing up teas from leaves and roots" (Ward 30), showing how African American healing traditions have survived despite
attempts to erase them. Her connection to both medicine and spirits makes her a crucial link between the living and the dead. Even as cancer weakens her physical body, her spiritual power grows stronger: "She sees everything now. She knows things she ain't known before" (Ward 139). Through Mam, Ward shows how spiritual healing practices
serve not just to cure bodies but to maintain connections with ancestry and tradition. When Kayla later inherits this gift for spiritual communication, it shows how these powers, like trauma, pass through generations - but as a source of strength rather than pain. Supernatural Elements and Ghosts The spiritual journey in the novel intensifies when Jojo
encounters Richie's ghost during their trip to Parchman. Like the smell of death that opens the novel, supernatural elements emerge through physical sensations. Jojo first senses Richie as "a shiver in the dark" (Ward 130). The ghost boy appears young, confused, and lost, much like Jojo himself, telling stories about Parchman that echo Pop's
memories but add new layers of pain. Through Richie, Jojo experiences how the prison's brutal past bleeds into its present. "I know how the afterlife isn't separate from the living world and new layers of pain. Through Richie, Jojo experiences how the prison's brutal past bleeds into its present. "I know how the hot makes you feel slow, like everything's melting," Richie tells Jojo, "Like your bones gone soft in the sun" (Ward 131). These ghostly encounters show how the afterlife isn't separate from the living world and the sun is a separate from the living world and the sun is a separate from the living world and the sun is a separate from the living world and the sun is a separate from the living world and the sun is a separate from the living world and the sun is a separate from the living world and the sun is a separate from the living world and the sun is a separate from the living world and the sun is a separate from the living world and the sun is a separate from the living world and the sun is a separate from the living world and the sun is a separate from the living world and the sun is a separate from the living world and the sun is a separate from the s
instead, it's as close as the Mississippi heat, as real as the road to Parchman. The fact that Jojo and the family's eyes follow the shadows of things that have not yet been given resolution. So when Richie goes on a journey with Jojo and his family back
home, he brings not just his own story but the weight of history, which became the bridge between death and suffering in the past, to meddle with the presents not just her personal grief but the broader violence
against Black lives. When Leonie sees Given, "He's wearing the same clothes he died in" (Ward 50), forcing her to relive her trauma repeatedly. Meanwhile, Richie's ghost embodies the unresolved injustices of Parchman's history. When he says, "I don't know what I am" (Ward 189), he speaks for all those trapped between life and death, justice and
injustice. Together, these spirits reveal how unresolved historical trauma haunts both places and people. Their presence makes visible what Pop's stories can only describe - the way violence and racism leave marks that last beyond death. When Kayla finally sings to these spirits at the novel's end, it shows how acknowledging and confronting these
ghostly presences might begin a kind of healing. Historical Context The ghostly encounters in Sing, Unburied, Sing connect deeply to Southern history and African American traditions. When Pop tells Jojo about Parchman prison, saying, "Worst come after death" (Ward 72), he reveals how the prison carried on slavery's legacy. Richie's ghost appears
during a car journey north, mirroring the historical path many Black Americans took to escape Southern oppression. The way Mam uses traditional healing practices while dying and how Kayla inherits this spiritual power to sing to the ghosts draws from African American spiritual beliefs about death and ancestors. Even the title "Sing, Unburied,
Sing" points to how singing has historically been both resistance and remembrance in Black culture, from slave spirituals to prison work songs at Parchman. These connections show how the supernatural elements aren't just ghost stories - they're ways of understanding generations of survival and resistance. Richie's story at Parchman reveals the
prison's brutal history through a child's eyes. He was imprisoned at just twelve years old for stealing food to feed his siblings, showing how poverty and systemic racism trapped even children in the prison system. "I was young," Richie tells Jojo, "Younger than you. Twelve" (Ward 134). Pop was forced to watch over Richie at Parchman, creating a bond
that haunts Pop decades later. Through Richie's ghost, we learn how prisoners were treated like plantation slaves - forced to work in fields, beaten, and killed for attempting escape. His death story, which Pop keeps secret until near the novel's end, shows the impossible choices people face under such an inhuman system. When Richie tries to escape,
Pop has to make a devastating decision: "I couldn't let him die like that," Pop finally admits, revealing how he killed Richie's perspective as both a child prisoner and a ghost shows how Parchman's violence destroys innocence and creates wounds that refuse to heal. The
opening lines of the book, compared to the final pages, illustrate this transition: "I like to think I know what death is. I like to think I know what death is. I like to think I know what death is is normal and boring so Pop will think I've earned these thirteen years" (Ward 1). Yet, when confronted with a goat being killed, he is unable to keep his
composure and must run outside to throw up. By the end of the book, Jojo has a better grasp of the world. After resenting his mother for years, feeling like she was a bad mother, he realizes she has her own traumas she is struggling to overcome: "Sometimes, late at night, [...] I think I understand Leonie. I think I know something about what she feels.
That maybe I know a little bit about why she left" (Ward 279). Though Jojo's mother's actions have influenced him, he comes to understand that the past continually influences the burden Leonie has lived with. The personification of this transgenerational
trauma in the form of ghosts, the people that the characters carry with them all: "Her eyes Michael's, her nose Leonie's, the set of her
shoulders Pop's, and the way she looks upward like she is measuring the tree, all Mam. But something about the way she stands, the way she stands, the way she takes all the pieces of everybody and holds them together, is all her. Kayla encounter ghosts
of the past, Given and Richie included, and gain insight into not only their sufferings but the continued sufferings around them. No one has acknowledged that while Parchman has advanced, it still resembles the plantation prison from years ago. It takes Michael years to confront Big Joseph and his issues with Leonie and the children. However, Jojo
has heard the voices of the ghosts, seen their traumas, and now, as Richie tells him, "Now you understand life. Now you understand life. Now you know. Death" (Ward 282). CopyJojo's story teaches us that the past continually influences the present. Through Pop's stories of Parchman, Leonie's grief over Given, and the ghosts that follow the family, Ward shows how trauma
passes through generations. Our ancestors influence future generations' views and ideologies, as seen in Big Joseph's continued racism affecting his grandchildren. However, the novel also shows that confronting the past and its injustices can lead to understanding and growth, just as Jojo finally understands Leonie's struggles: "Sometimes, late at
night, [...] I think I understand Leonie" (Ward 279). When systemic racism and trauma are confronted, as Kayla does through her singing to the ghosts, solutions can be found, better systems of justice can be developed, and ingrained racial prejudices can start to be broken down. References Conroy, R. A. J. (2020) What Is Wardian?: Formulating
Jesmyn Ward's Literary Style And Technique Through Textual Analysis, Comparison, And Differentiation. Available at: Niche Quotes (n.d.) '91 Sing Unburied Sing Quotes - Niche Quotes (2017) 'Flayed.' Oxford American, Issue 96 (Spring 2017). Available at: Pesce, E. (2021) Piecing
together African Americans' future: The subversive relationship between children and death as a space of cultural and historical reappropriation in Jesmyn Ward is considered an important author in American literature owing
to her ability to showcase an intimate and in-depth understanding of language. Ward's works explore American families and their diverse cultures. All of Ward's novels are set in the small town of Bois Sauvage, where she lives today and where she lives today and their diverse cultures.
be relatable. We will write a custom essay on your topic tailored to your instructions! Ward uses simple descriptions, such as names, to spotlight a family's issues while striking dialogue with her work. Ward tells stories through the perspectives of different characters and demonstrates the ability to shape a simple story into a complex journey about
family and coming of age. She uses dialogue and presents a cunny use of language to make her stories relatable. Additionally, the author uses the individual characters in her stories to identify mental differences in a family and society at large. These differences are assumed to help the individuals transition into adulthood. For example, themes such
as time, love, and the changing definition of a home have been used to show character development in her book. The author's writing is characterized by her subtle messaging and clear details about life. Her life in Bois Sauvage made her familiar with the hidden impacts of intergenerational trauma, and this is brought out in her work. Through her
literary texts, Ward effectively proves that little events that affect a familial relationship play a significant role in the bigger problems the family faces. Her current novel "Sing, Unburied, Sing", has won her a second National Book Award for Fiction, due to the text's ability to resonate with the readers as well as the author's prowess in writing. Similar
Themes Discussed So Far The impact of American racism, loss of innocence as well as family relationships are some of the themes that are well brought out in the excerpt. Ward focuses on how a racist past still haunts many households through her novel "Sing, Unburied, Sing". She nattily confronts the racism theme, making the reader inquire how
such concerns can be resolved without ignoring the different emotions of the parties involved. Additionally, Ward delves into the theme of familial relationship, where she proves that a family unit, in this sense, includes friends and
extended relatives. In the excerpt, Jojo and Kayla have both parents, but one is in jail while the other is a drug addict. As a result, Jojo and Kayla's grandparents take on parental roles and their carefree approach pushes the two children to grow up faster than normal. Comparison of Themes Get your 100% customized paper done in as little as 1 hour A
comparison of the selected excerpt and other literary works discussed so far reveals that trauma, drug abuse, and racism are common themes. Jojo expected a birthday cake from Mam who, as stated by Ward, was "sweating, her skin looks pale and dry, like a muddy puddle dried to nothing after weeks of no rain in the summer" (Ward, p. 17). Jojo is
traumatized by her grandmother's sickness. Even though the novel is set in 2010, the characters in "Sing, Unburied, Sing" still feel the repercussions of America's history of racial discrimination. The fact that Kayla and Jojo are biracial makes life harder for them. Much of the story from the excerpt involves Jojo trying to deal with the trauma of living
with a sick grandmother and a drug-addicted mother as she tries to discover her self-worth. Work Cited Ward, Jesmyn. Sing, Unburied, Sing, Unb
experiences into a multi-narrative story which Jojo, a thirteen-year-old boy, his family, and Richie, a tethered spirit, share. Set in the fictional town of Bois Sauvage, Mississippi, the story centers on the characters' trip to Parchman Farm penitentiary to retrieve Jojo's white father, Michael. One after another, events begin to gradually devolve, revealing
each character's afflictions to the core. Don't use plagiarized sources. Get your custom essay on "Sing, Unburied, Sing" by Jesmyn Ward "Get custom paper NEW! smart matching with writer Toxic and transfusable, each character's illness collectively stems from their environment. Episodically thematic, vomiting occurs in correlation to a creole
belief regarding one's spirit being expunged through regurgitation. Burdened, the majority of characters vomit their individual maladies: Jojo, with his forced maturation, Kayla, Jojo's sister, with her mistreatment, Leonie, their mother, with her grief, and Richie, with his subjugating imprisonment at Parchman. Shared in suffering, trauma's residual
 effects seep through cracks of generations and leave future ones relying on each other for healing. The biracial son of Leonie and Michael, Jojo is unusually solemn and developed for his age. With a drug-addicted mother and an imprisoned father with racist familial ties, Jojo is unusually solemn and developed for his age. With a drug-addicted mother for healing. The biracial son of Leonie and Michael, Jojo is unusually solemn and developed for his age.
surrogate parent to Michaela, whom he calls Kayla, and through his admiration for his grandfather, River, whom he calls 'Pop'. Opening the story, insight is given to Jojo's manifested illness when accompanying River to slaughter a goat in preparation for his grandfather, River, whom he calls 'Pop'. Opening the story, insight is given to Jojo's manifested illness when accompanying River to slaughter a goat in preparation for his grandfather, River, whom he calls 'Pop'. Opening the story, insight is given to Jojo's manifested illness when accompanying River to slaughter a goat in preparation for his grandfather, River, whom he calls 'Pop'. Opening the story, insight is given to Jojo's manifested illness when accompanying River to slaughter a goat in preparation for his grandfather, River, whom he calls 'Pop'. Opening the story, insight is given to Jojo's manifested illness when accompanying River to slaughter a goat in preparation for his grandfather, River, whom he calls 'Pop'. Opening the story, insight is given to Jojo's manifested illness when accompanying River to slaughter a goat in preparation for his grandfather, and the slaughter a goat in preparation for his grandfather, and the slaughter a goat in preparation for his grandfather, and the slaughter a goat in preparation for his grandfather, and the slaughter a goat in preparation for his grandfather and the slaughter a goat in preparation for his grandfather and the slaughter and the slaughter a goat in preparation for his grandfather and the slaughter a goat in preparation for his grandfather and the slaughter a goat in preparation for his grandfather and the slaughter and the slau
hanger; that's how Pop walks. I try to look like this is normal and boring so Pop will think I've earned these thirteen years, so Pop will know I can get bloody. Today's my birthday. (1) Willing to participate in visceral disembowelment, Jojo
naively perceives that through emulating Pop and acting untroubled, the label of manhood would be bestowed upon him. 'I don't want him to read my slowness as fear, as weakness, as me not being old enough to look at death like a man should'(3). Brown skinned tinged with red and family oriented, Jojo's ideal male paragon is his grandfather. A
substitute parent to both Jojo and Kayla, Pop is a compassionate and selfless influence on Jojo's care for his sister. Possessing an almost telepathic bond, Jojo and his sister are effectively 'each other's light' (92). He can tell she's 'her animal self' in his arms and she can always count on him to let her be in them. (68) Although very responsible of him,
this overdevelopment contributes to his illness, as he is still an adolescent. Leering at Leonie's friend, Misty, Jojo shows a sexual curiosity just like any other boy his age. 'Misty's shirt, which is cut wide and loose around the neckline, stretches out even more so that the top of her bra peeks through". (37) Susceptible, Jojo's innocence is further shown in
his near-fatal encounter with a police officer: 'It's easy to look at him, his weedy height, the thick spread of his belly, and think he's grown. But he's just a baby'. (99) Unsurprisingly then, Jojo pukes when the goat's death overwhelms him, symbolizing that despite his maturity, he is still too young for its demands. Leonie's relation to both Jojo and Kayla
naturally passes down her illness to her offspring. Traumatized by her brother, Given, dving of a hate crime, she is rendered unable to cope and be a maternal figure. Her champion, Given, had buffered the toxic hostility of their prejudiced community for her. 'I couldn't count how many times he fought for us on the bus, in school, in the neighborhood
when kids taunted me'(22-23). Vulnerable and grief-stricken, she possesses an illness which could be detected from her substance abuse, self-absorption, and guilt of letting everyone down. It feels good to be mean, to speak past the baby I can't hit and let that anger touch another. The one I'm never good enough for. Never Mama for. Just Leonie, a
name wrapped around the same disappointed syllables I've heard from Mama, from Pop, even Given, my whole fucking life. (89) This illness is clear through her prioritizing destructive self-interests and having deliriums of Given's disapproving specter. For example, Leonie sees Given when neglecting her kids and taking meth. 'Standing outside of the
hallway to the kids' room', Given-not-Given's demeanor is that of disappointment, expressing only 'a soft frown' (91). Consequently, her illness not only affects her presence: He rubs her back and she rubs his, and I stand there,
watching my children comfort each other. My hands itch, wanting to do something. I could reach out and touch them both, but I don't. (62) Although largely beneficial, their relationship is a necessity due to Leonie's lack of maternal instinct. This maternal absence results in intergenerational trauma, as Kayla develops her own illness, which ensues
from Leonie's mistreatment. In a vehicle in which her mother and Misty are smuggling drugs, Kayla incessantly expunges herself of her toxic environment through vomiting. This idea is further substantiated when I stand inside the car door with more
electrolytes'. (62) Emblematic, Kayla requiritates her mother's incorrectly suggested Powerade in order to free herself of the trauma of Leonie attempts to brew a concoction filled with curative herbs suggested by her mother, Philomene. Unfortunately, she proves once again incapable as Kayla also spews that
out. As Jojo recounts, 'she ain't never healed nothing or grown nothing in her life 'but instead 'Leonie kill things'. (66)(67) Ironically, Leonie's self-absorption and drug use almost get Jojo killed himself. When terry-stopped by a police officer, she swallows a bag of meth and is rendered powerless to a gun being pointed in her son's face. It is not until
she regurgitates her burden (symbolically represented by drugs) that Leonie starts exhibiting motherly traits. Upon confronting Michael stempt to gain their acceptance of her and her kids departing hand in hand. 'I
want to go back and help Michael, I don't. I open the door and pull Jojo and Michaela. ' (127) Vomiting out her illness, Leonie finally overcomes her selfish desires. Instead of remaining, she decides that the brutal racism and violent skirmishing were too much. In doing this, she finally shows the capability of overcoming her grief and the potential of
her being a good mother. Transcending time, Richie's manifested illness captures the dark history of the South while simultaneously paralleling Jojo's. Recounted to Jojo by Richie's manifested illness captures the dark history of the South while simultaneously paralleling Jojo's. Recounted to Jojo by Richie's manifested illness captures the dark history of the South while simultaneously paralleling Jojo's.
profound subjugation and glaringly biased structure. With 'trees flat' and 'open to the earth', its deceptive nature practices self- conditioning. (13) As Pop states, 'Parchman the kind of place that fool you into thinking it ain't no prison, ain't going to be so bad when you first see it, because ain't no walls'. (13) Inherently racist, it embodies
the violent paradox of the criminal justice system. A hierarchical order of sergeants, 'trusty shooters', and 'gunmen', Parchman authorizes white murderers into positions of power identical to slavery. This is greatly highlighted
when Pop, a natural caretaker, is replaced by a less suited Hogjaw. Explaining this, the warden simply states 'a colored man don't know how to master because it ain't in him to master because it ain 
familiar scent. Indicative of white impunity, Kennie's escape shows how easy it was for people like him to avoid the law. Unfortunately, this didn't apply to young, poverty-stricken black boys like Richie. Sent at twelve years old to Parchman for stealing salted meat for his siblings, he like Jojo was a victim of his circumstance. He had lacked basic
necessities and a result of his race and class was forced to mature. An adolescent, he exhibited young and naive characteristics, having 'a big head shaped like an onion' and relishing his name's condescending wordplay. (14) What's your name boy? Richard. Everybody call me Richie for short. Like it's a joke. He looked at me with his eyebrows raised
and a little smile on his face, so small it was only his mouth opening to show his teeth, white and crowding. I didn't get the joke, so he slumped and explained with his spoon. Cause I be stealing. So I'm rich? I look down at my hands. Crumb-clean and still felt like I hadn't eaten. it's a joke, he said. So I gave Richie what he wanted. He was a boy. I
laughed. (15) Because he was so young, Richie was in no way, shape, or form prepared for the horrors and vigorous labor at Parchman. He 'didn't have enough years in his arms for muscle', or the necessary experience for survival. (45-46) Pop, on the other hand, was built for labor. He was sturdy and knew that in Parchman's scorching heat and
oppressive nature, a man shouldn't 'think, just feel'. (45) This wasn't the same for Richie as when forced into the long line, he breaks his hoe and dirt-filled environment. 'I dream about it. Dream I'm eating it with a long silver spoon.' (77) Traumatized, he
throws up and exclaims 'I'm going home', expunging himself and deciding that he was leaving for a place where he could be what he was, a boy. Sadly, he never gets the chance, dying in the most tragic form. Having escaped with Blue, an inmate who murdered and raped women, Richie is chased through the woods by a bloodthirsty mob. Lynching
and dismembering Blue first, the crowd then turn their attention to Richie. Viewing all this, Pop is then faced with a heartbreaking ultimatum in which he saves Richie from an appalling fate but by killing him out of mercy. This in turn also scars Pop who quiveringly recounting Richie's death, is shaken. Never allowed to be a kid freed from racism and
poverty, or know the unjust nature of his death, Richie is tethered in a liminal state. It is only when Pop tells him the matter of his death, his ill-fated life is cleansed and he is allowed to transition into the afterlife. The grim world of Sing, Unburied, Sing is very much like our own-containing devastating trauma in which the past, present, and future,
share. Characters are very much like that of reality, possessing illnesses manifested in everyday life. The novel's grasp of Creole religion and America's ugly truths are truly penetrating and awe-inspiring due to its insightful coverage of many topics. Its characters' road trip transitions into a more universal story united by the ideal life of an African
American in the rural South. The nature of continued suffering throughout generations is both harsh and accurate. From a young modern black boy in Jojo to one in previous decades like Richie, Ward creates a story in which trauma has an everlasting effect. Whether seen through the elderly Pop, or fledgling toddler, Kayla, the living and the dead
confront racism and its handprint on their history through real-life experiences. 1 How is Sing, Unburied, Sing a family saga? In the first section of the story, the reader is introduced to Jojo and his "nuclear" family. Jojo lives with his mother Leonie, his younger sister Kayla, and his maternal grandparents. However, as the story progresses, we
understand that the events that unfold implicate those beyond Jojo's immediate family. The novel's narrative style intertwines generations and other traditional time-based realms. Spiritual family is equally as important as physical family, and
ghosts guide other characters in their decision-making. In this way, Sing, Unburied, Sing extends the understanding of what we consider "family" and encourages us to be open to non-traditional notions of family. 2 What does singing symbolize in the novel's title, singing is a recurrent motif that is essential to the story.
Singing is a form of communication and connection—it is a vehicle that allows characters across generations and "realms of reality" to better understand one another. Singing allows for those who have died unjustly to continue expressing themselves and breathe life into their stories. Through singing, culture is preserved and ancestral tradition is
kept alive. 3 What is the significance of the alternating narrators? Throughout the story, the narrators create a sort of "holy trinity." They offer different perspectives and allow the reader to develop a more non-judgmental, empathetic worldview. Jojo's tenuous relationship with
Leonie prompts him to approach his narration with anger and resentment. In Leonie's narration, however, we understand that she struggles with addiction and the pressures of motherhood. Richie has a more detached perspective that analyzes the family's dynamics from farther away. Through Richie, we understand the love that binds Jojo's family
together. 4 What is the significance of Leonie and Michael is relationship? Michael is relationship? Michael is relationship? Michael and Leonie and Michael is relationship? Michael and their children.
Michael's return home triggers Leonie's anxieties about her inability to provide for her family. The sinking raft symbolizes that Leonie is "drowning" in life's pressures. In addition, the audience begins to learn more about the complicated dynamics of Leonie and Michael's interracial relationship. While the audience is aware that Michael's family was
responsible for covering up the murder of Given, Leonie and her children are rejected by Michael's family's prejudice, she also acts subservient to Michael because she has internalized
her own racialized sense of inferiority. 5 How does the novel explore parent-child relationships? As Mam lays dying, Leonie's intense emotional reactions can be perceived as "childish." While Leonie to step into the role of caretaker. Meanwhile, Jojo often feels as a child who has been supported by her parents, Mam's death forces Leonie to step into the role of caretaker. Meanwhile, Jojo often feels as a child who has been supported by her parents, Mam's death forces Leonie to step into the role of caretaker.
that he is the "parent" in Kayla's life. While Leonie is out working or doing drugs, he takes on most of the domestic and emotional responsibilities of parenting. In these examples, Ward underscores how families operate when they encounter crises. Jesmyn Ward's novel "Sing, Unburied, Sing" tells the story of a young black boy named Jojo and his
mother, Leonie. The novel explores themes of family, race, and love. Jesmyn Ward is a National Book Award winner and her novel has been praised by critics. The opening sentence of Sing, Unburied, Sing introduces the novel has been praised by critics. The opening sentence of Sing, Unburied, Sing introduces the novel has been praised by critics.
Jojo's assertion that death is inevitable in the first lines establishes a major theme for the characters, who can't escape death as it becomes a vital source of nourishment to them as they confront their personal demons that torment them throughout the book. The way in which Jesmyn Ward uses music as a form of hope and liberation for the characters
is significant as it allows them to remember the happier moments in their lives when they can sing and be free from their struggles. Music becomes a symbol of hope that reminds them of a time when things were simpler and they had less weight on their struggles. Music becomes a symbol of hope that reminds them of a time when things were simpler and they had less weight on their struggles. Music becomes a symbol of hope that reminds them of a time when things were simpler and they had less weight on their struggles.
grapple with death, addiction, and secrets. The prologue opens with Jojo's bold claim about death, which sets the stage for the novel, providing hope and liberation for the characters as they remember happier times. Ultimately, Sing, Unburied, Sing is a powerful story
about family, hope, and the importance of coming to terms with the past. The recurring subject of death offers a broader and more significant topic than the trauma of losing a loved one to death. The initial sentence in particular gives readers an image of Jojo as a person. Jesmyn Ward, like The Bluest Eye, makes the point that physical attractiveness
does not guarantee happiness. The second paragraph provides an example of this when Jojo's reaction to death foreshadows how he will eventually deal with his own mortality. Jesmyn Ward expertly weaves in the idea that love can transcend time and space, which is evident in the third
paragraph when Leonie talks about her deceased mother. Jesmyn Ward's novel Sing, Unburied, Sing is a beautiful and haunting portrait of a family struggling to grapple with the past and present. Jojo's line, "I like to believe I understand what death is," offers the reader a certain perception of the character, implying that he may be mature beyond his
young age and capable of comprehending that death is a looming danger that no one can escape. Jojo's opening statement, "I prefer to believe I know what death is," establishes an atmosphere alluding to the demanding trials of life with which he may or may not be familiar because of his young age of 13 years old. Jesmyn Ward's novel, "Sing,
Unburied, Sing" centers around the lives of a black family in the American South and how they deal with racism, poverty, love, and loss. Jesmyn Ward was born in DeLisle, Mississippi. In 2005, she received her MFA from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her first novel, Where the Line Bleeds (2004) was a national bestseller. In 2011, she
published her second novel Salvage the Bones which won the National Book Award for Fiction. Jesmyn is also the author of Men We Reaped (2013), a memoir about the deaths of five young men close to her. Jesmyn currently is an Associate Professor of English at Tulane University. Jesmyn Ward's writing often focuses on the lives of poor black people
in the American South. In an interview with The Atlantic, Jesmyn said, "The South is still very present for me, even though I don't live there anymore. It's always with me, in my bones... There are these ideas about the South is still very present for me, even though I don't live there anymore. It's always with me, in my bones... There are these ideas about the South is still very present for me, even though I don't live there anymore. It's always with me, in my bones... There are these ideas about the South is still very present for me, even though I don't live there anymore. It's always with me, in my bones... There are these ideas about the South is still very present for me, even though I don't live there anymore. It's always with me, in my bones... There are these ideas about the South is still very present for me, even though I don't live there anymore. It's always with me, in my bones... There are these ideas about the South is still very present for me, even though I don't live there anymore. It's always with me, in my bones... There are these ideas about the South is still very present for me, even though I don't live there anymore. It's always with me, in my bones... There are these ideas about the South is still very present for me, even though I don't live there are the south is still very present for me, even though I don't live there are the south is still very present for me, even though I don't live there are the south is still very present for me, even though I don't live there are the south is still very present for me, even though I don't live there are the south is still very present for me, even the south is still very present for me, even the south is still very present for me, even the south is still very present for me, even the south is still very present for me, even the south is still very present for me, even the south is still very present for me, even the south is still very present for me, even the south is still very present for me, even the south is still very present for me, ev
that the South is not just a place full of history, but a place where people are living and dealing with complex issues like poverty and racism. Jesmyn Ward's novel, "Sing, Unburied, Sing" was published in 2017 and it won the National Book Award for Fiction. The novel follows the lives of the black family, the Levesques, living in Bois Sauvage,
Mississippi. The family consists of 13-year-old Jojo, his younger sister Kayla, their mother Leonie, and Pop. When we first meet Jojo, he is telling us about his dead father, Michael Turner. Jojo states, "I like to think I know what death is... But sometimes I think I only know what dying is, and that death is something else entirely." This view of death
continues to be explored throughout the novel as various characters deal with their own mortality. One of the main themes in Jesmyn Ward's "Sing, Unburied, Sing" is how the past haunts the present. This is seen in how Jojo is constantly thinking about his dead father and how he never really got to know him. Michael Turner was killed when Jojo was
just a baby and all he has are memories of what others have told him about his father. However, these memories are not always accurate or positive. For example, Jojo's mother tells him that his father was a good man, even though she knows that he wasn't. Jesmyn Ward writes, "She wants to remember him as a good man because it's easier that way,
maybe, or because the truth is too ugly to face." Jesmyn Ward also explores the theme of racism in "Sing, Unburied, Sing". The novel is set in Mississippi which has a long history of racism. Racism is seen in how Jojo and Kayla are treated by their classmates at school. It is also seen in how Pop is treated by the white people he works for. Even though
Pop is a hard worker, he is still not given the same respect as the white workers. Jesmyn Ward's "Sing, Unburied, Sing" is a novel about family, love, loss, and how the past haunts the present. It is a beautifully
written novel that explores the complicated lives of black people living in the American South. By employing strong language to describe the conclusion of the opening paragraph, the author emphasizes the tearing away of an undetectable animal. The invisible creature can represent society's destruction of people because it tears apart someone until
they are nothing more than shattered pieces. In addition to vocalizing foreshadowing elements we see throughout the book as to how racial prejudice will affect the various characters, "separate innards from muscles, organs from cavities" expresses this motif. Jesmyn Ward's debut novel, "Sing," takes the reader on a journey through
the lives of people who are struggling to find their way in a world that often seems determined to hold them back. The novel centers around the lives of Leonie, her partner Michael, and their way in a world that often seems determined to hold them back. The novel centers around the lives of Leonie, her partner Michael, and their way in a world that often seems determined to hold them back. The novel centers around the lives of Leonie, her partner Michael, and their way in a world that often seems determined to hold them back. The novel centers around the lives of Leonie, her partner Michael, and their way in a world that often seems determined to hold them back. The novel centers around the lives of Leonie, her partner Michael, and their way in a world that often seems determined to hold them back. The novel centers around the lives of Leonie, her partner Michael, and their way in a world that often seems determined to hold them back.
possession of drugs and is now serving time in prison. This has put a strain on Leonie, who is trying to raise their two kids on her own. Several characters in the novel have meaningful names: Pop's name ("River") connects him to the novel have meaningful names after the racist grandfather who rejects him; and Leonie insists on calling Kayla
 "Michaela" to underscore her relationship to Michael. How does Ward use names to develop the work's overall meaning?
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