

# "Salvation"

By Langston Hughes

more flippant

Theme: Langston thinks that religion is more a mindless following than a choice. You have to believe in Jesus yourself, not be led.

1 I was saved from sin when I was going on thirteen. But not really saved. It happened like this. There was a big revival at my Auntie Reed's church. Every night for weeks there had been much preaching, singing, praying, and shouting, and some very hardened sinners had been brought to Christ, and the membership of the church had grown by leaps and bounds. Then just before the revival ended, they held a special meeting for children, "to bring the young lambs to the fold." My aunt spoke of it for days ahead. That night I was escorted to the front row and placed on the mourners' bench with all the other young sinners, who had not yet been brought to Jesus.

Illustrates the flock likeness of many religions. The "need" to belong.

2 My aunt told me that when you were saved you saw a light, and something happened to you inside! And Jesus came into your life! And God was with you from then on! She said you could see and hear and feel Jesus in your soul. I believed her. I had heard a great many old people say the same thing and it seemed to me they ought to know. So I sat there calmly in the hot, crowded church, waiting for Jesus to come to me.

Contrasts the blind followers to the truth seeker.

3 The preacher preached a wonderful rhythmical sermon, all moans and shouts and lonely cries and dire pictures of hell, and then he sang a song about the ninety and nine safe in the fold, but one little lamb was left out in the cold. Then he said: "Won't you come? Won't you come to Jesus? Young lambs, won't you come?" And he held out his arms to all us young sinners there on the mourners' bench. And the little girls cried. And some of them jumped up and went to Jesus right away. But most of us just sat there.

Exploring the feelings of being in a "flock" & why people run to it.

4 A great many old people came and knelt around us and prayed, old women with jet-black faces and braided hair, old men with work-gnarled hands. And the church sang a song about the lower lights are burning, some poor sinners to be saved. And the whole building rocked with prayer and song.

Illustrating the need to see to believe.

5 Still I kept waiting to see Jesus.

I.D. sentence

6 Finally all the young people had gone to the altar and were saved, but one boy and me. He was a rounder's son named Westley. Westley and I were surrounded by sisters and deacons praying. It was very hot in the church, and getting late now. Finally Westley said to me in a whisper: "God damn! I'm tired o' sitting here. Let's get up and be saved." So he got up and was saved.

Contrasts the boy, W, who doesn't really care w/ L, who is very conflicted about not seeing.

7 Then I was left all alone on the mourners' bench. My aunt came and knelt at my knees and cried, while prayers and song swirled all around me in the little church. The whole congregation prayed for me alone, in a mighty wail of moans and voices. And I kept waiting serenely for Jesus, waiting, waiting - but he didn't come. I wanted to see him, but nothing

Illustrates the need to have proof despite pressure.

Follow the flock & come to Jesus. Be part of the group to be saved. A very adult influence on the kids.

Needs proof. All the other children seemingly just go ahead. L & W wait. W finally goes to be done w/ it.

Langston feels the desperation of the congregation. He waits & waits for something to happen. Nothing.

(rounder - juvenile delinquent) TW, hot = stress

7 happened to me. Nothing! I wanted something to happen to me, but nothing happened.

ID sentence

The congregation, + preacher

L is very troubled that L won't come + cries out to him.

I heard the songs and the minister saying: "Why don't you come? My dear child, why don't you come to Jesus? Jesus is waiting for you. He wants you. Why don't you come? Sister Reed, what is this child's name?"

9 "Langston," my aunt sobbed.

10 "Langston, why don't you come? Why don't you come and be saved? Oh, Lamb of God! Why don't you come?"

Shows the need for the flock to be together + their want for their own to join them.

Compares a free thinker to a follower

-Arguing the morality of just following blindly in something you don't believe in

Now it was really getting late. I began to be ashamed of myself, holding everything up so long. I began to wonder what God thought about Westley, who certainly hadn't seen Jesus either, but who was now sitting proudly on the platform, swinging his knickerbockered legs and grinning down at me, surrounded by deacons and old women on their knees praying. God had not struck Westley dead for taking his name in vain or for lying in the temple. So I decided that maybe to save further trouble, I'd better lie, too, and say that Jesus had come, and get up and be saved.

TW

KW

KW

12 So I got up.

Suddenly the whole room broke into a sea of shouting, as they saw me rise. Waves of rejoicing swept the place. Women leaped in the air. My aunt threw her arms around me. The minister took me by the hand and led me to the platform.

FL

FL

When things quieted down, in a hushed silence, punctuated by a few ecstatic "Amens," all the new young lambs were blessed in the name of God. Then joyous singing filled the room.

-Illustrates the giving in/breaking of will against the might of a flock. Peer pressure, + The joy of the flock joining him, a lamb.

That night, for the first time in my life but one for I was a big boy twelve years old - I cried. I cried, in bed alone, and couldn't stop. I buried my head under the quilts, but my aunt heard me. She woke up and told my uncle I was crying because the Holy Ghost had come into my life, and because I had seen Jesus. But I was really crying because I couldn't bear to tell her that I had lied, that I had deceived everybody in the church, that I hadn't seen Jesus, and that now I didn't believe there was a Jesus anymore, since he didn't come to help me.

Peer pressure, + The joy of the flock joining him, a lamb.

L becomes a lamb. The other lambs are very happy!

L is devastated by his lie + because he has lost faith due to his misinterpretation of his aunts words prior.

ID sentence

-Illustrates the let down of not finding the proof one wants/needs. -Contrasts the flock's interpretation to L's.

Tone words?

## left side

\* The uncircled parts are the ones I call the "Lamb section". In these sections, the text speaks of following the status quote, or being led.

\* The circled passages are of Langston's feelings. Which search for truth, & for it to be proved to him & shown to him.

paragraph 1 - This is a Lamb section.  
It says that there is a big revival at the church, and everyone is being saved. It was a must do.

paragraph 2 This is circled. Langston believes that Jesus will appear to him physically because of what his aunt said.

paragraph 11 Circled. Langston is debating the dishonesty of Westley & if he could be that way & just go ahead with it. Wonders why God didn't punish the War.