

## Exploring Literary Devices in The Weary Blues by Langston Hughes for Enhanced Reader Comprehension and Appreciation

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### Abstract

*This study uses a qualitative approach that focuses on an in-depth analysis of Langston Hughes' poem The Weary Blues, with the aim of exploring and understanding the use of literary devices in the work. The main analytical framework used is L.G. Alexander's theory, which classifies literary devices into three main categories: structural devices, sound devices, and sense devices. The main methodology applied in this study is the close reading technique, which enables in-depth identification and analysis of the various literary devices used by Hughes. In addition, the analysis takes into account the historical and cultural background of the Harlem Renaissance era, which greatly influenced Hughes' works. The primary source of this research is the thoroughly analyzed text of the poem The Weary Blues, as well as various secondary sources that discuss Hughes' work and African-American modernist poetry. The research also integrates aspects of reader response theory to understand how the literary devices used by Hughes influence readers' interpretation and appreciation of his poetry. The results of the analysis show that the use of complex and interrelated literary devices, such as repetition, rhyme, and imagery, enriches the reader's multisensory experience, thereby enhancing understanding and appreciation of the poem. The findings emphasize the importance of more effective educational approaches to teaching poetry analysis as well as learning strategies that can deepen readers' engagement with literary texts.*

**Keywords:** Literacy, Reader Comprehension, Appreciation.

### INTRODUCTION

Poetry, as the most dense and intense form of literary expression, has long been an interesting object of study for literary critics, academics, and educators. The beauty and power of poetry lies not only in the meaning it conveys, but also in the way it is conveyed through various literary devices. These literary devices include a variety of techniques that poets use to create aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual effects on readers. John Strachan (2011) states that Poetry is a cultural form in which the placement of words is driven as much by their sound as by their meaning. This statement emphasizes the importance of considering sound and semantic aspects in the analysis of poetry.

In the context of modern American poetry, particularly that of the Harlem Renaissance movement, the use of literary devices has become increasingly complex and rich, reflecting the fusion of African-American traditions with Western literary forms (Hutchinson, 2020). Langston Hughes, one of the most influential figures in this movement, is known for his remarkable ability to use literary devices to depict the African-American experience. His poem, "The Weary

Blues”, is a perfect example of his skill in combining musical elements of the blues with sophisticated poetic techniques.

According to Ramazani (2020), a deep understanding of poetry involves an integrated analysis of various poetic elements, including structure, sound, and meaning. In this context, the three main categories of literary devices that need to be considered are structure devices, sound devices, and sense devices. Each of these categories plays an important role in shaping the overall effect of the poem and contributes to its effectiveness in conveying themes and emotions.

Structural devices refer to the way the poem is organized and structured. It includes elements such as stanzas, lines, rhyme, and metric patterns. According to Caplan (2020), the structure of a poem serves not only as a framework, but also as an important element in conveying meaning and emotion. In “The Weary Blues”, the structure of the poem becomes very important because it reflects the musical structure of the blues itself. Hughes' use of repetition, chorus, and certain rhythmic patterns not only creates musicality in the poem, but also reinforces the themes of fatigue and repetition that are central to the blues experience.

Sound devices, on the other hand, pertain to the auditory aspect of the poem. These include techniques such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, and onomatopoeia. Leech (2021) emphasizes that sound devices in poetry serve to create musical effects and reinforce semantic meaning. In the context of “The Weary Blues”, sound devices are crucial because the poem is essentially an attempt to capture the sound and rhythm of the blues in written form. Hughes' careful use of sound devices allows the reader to “hear” the blues melody through words, creating a rich multisensory experience.

Since of devices related to imagery and sensation, involve the use of figurative language such as metaphor, simile, personification, and imagery. Kao and Jurafsky (2022) assert that meaning devices in poetry serve not only as ornaments, but also as cognitive tools that enable readers to process and feel the experiences described in the poems more deeply. In “The Weary Blues”, meaning devices play an important role in describing the atmosphere, setting, and emotions associated with the blues experience. The use of personification, as in musical instruments, not only gives life to inanimate objects, but also reinforces the idea of emotional expression through music. Metaphors in these poems often connect music directly to life experiences, deepening the reader's understanding of the cultural and emotional significance of the blues.

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of literary devices in the analysis and teaching of poetry. Moht Aung's (2018) research on literary devices in Thomas Hardy's “The Voice” poem provides valuable methodological insights for a similar analysis of Hughes' poems. Although focusing on Hardy's work, the study demonstrates a comprehensive approach in analyzing various literary devices such as alliteration, assonance, personification, and metaphor. Aung's methodology can be adapted to investigate the influence of literary devices on the effectiveness of Hughes' poetry, especially in conveying cultural and emotional themes.

Furthermore, research conducted by Dufresne (2002) contributes significantly to the understanding of the use of literary devices in poetry. Dufresne emphasizes the importance of three key elements in creating powerful and effective poetry: imagery, tone, and personification. Using the comparative analysis method, this study reveals how these literary devices interact to create a rich experience for the reader. Dufresne's findings show that successful poetry does not rely on just one literary device, but integrates various elements harmoniously. Imagery is used to

create vivid visual images, tone shapes the overall attitude and mood of the poem, while personification gives a humanized quality to abstract objects or concepts. This study confirms that the balance and interaction between various literary devices is key to creating poetry that has a strong emotional and intellectual impact on its readers.

A further study conducted by Saputra (2023) expanded the understanding of the role of literary devices and musical elements in poetry. The study analyzed the use of various literary devices such as metaphor, personification, simile, apostrophe, and allegory, as well as musical elements such as rhyme, alliteration, assonance, consonance, and refrain. Using a qualitative analysis approach, Saputra reveals how these devices contribute to the overall meaning and interpretation of the poem. The research findings show that literary devices serve not only as ornaments, but also as powerful tools to convey themes, create imagery, and evoke emotions. In addition, musical elements were found to have an important role in enhancing the aesthetic appeal and rhythmic structure of the poem, which significantly affects the reader's experience. This study confirms that a comprehensive analysis of literary devices and musical elements is key to understanding the complexity and depth of poetry, as well as appreciating the poet's skill in integrating various elements to create a cohesive and memorable work.

While these studies have provided valuable insights, there are still gaps in a comprehensive understanding of how the three categories of literary devices-structural devices, sound devices, and sense devices-work together to create a powerful overall effect in this poem. Moreover, an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of each device in the context of Hughes' specific themes and artistic goals still needs to be further explored. Therefore, this study aims to comprehensively analyze the use of structure devices, sound devices, and meaning devices in Langston Hughes' "The Weary Blues", as well as evaluate the effectiveness of each of these device categories in conveying the poem's main themes and creating a distinctive aesthetic experience. By focusing on the interaction and synergy between these three categories of literary devices, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of Hughes' poetic craftsmanship and his significant contribution to the African-American poetic tradition and modern literature in general, as well as offer valuable insights for educators in teaching poetry analysis and appreciation.

### **The Role of Literary Devices in Poetry Analysis**

Literary devices are techniques that poets use to convey messages and deepen readers' understanding of their work. These tools serve as a means to create meaning, evoke emotion, and enhance the aesthetic quality of the poem. As Cuddon (2012) explains in his "Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory," literary devices are the basic components of poetic language, allowing poets to go beyond literal meaning and create layered and nuanced works. These devices are essential components of poetic language that allow poets to go beyond literal meaning and create layered compositions full of nuances. The importance of understanding and analyzing literary devices in poetry cannot be overstated. These literary devices provide a framework for readers and critics to dissect the complexity of a poem, providing insight into the poet's intentions, the thematic depth of the work, and overall artistic value (Abrams & Harpham, 2018).

L. G. Alexander (1990) divides literary devices in poetry into three main parts namely structural devices, sensory devices, and sound devices. This division provides a comprehensive

framework for analyzing the various elements that contribute to the effectiveness and impact of a poem. Through this three-dimensional approach, Alexander offers a systematic method to understand the complexity of poetry, allowing readers and critics to unravel the layers of meaning and techniques used by poets. This approach also helps us see how poets use language to create meaning and beauty in their work. It also allows us to appreciate the poet's skill in combining various elements of language into a cohesive and compelling work. By understanding these three aspects, we can not only enjoy poetry, but also appreciate the complexity and skill behind its creation. Structural devices form the architectural foundation of a poem so that it becomes a unified poetic whole.

These include elements such as repetition, rhyme scheme, meter, stanza form, and enjambement (Fussell, 1979). Repetition, for example, can create rhythm and emphasis in a poem, while rhyme schemes provide sound patterns that unify the lines of a poem. Meter, or the pattern of stress in words aims to establish a distinctive rhythm, while stanza form determines how the poem is presented visually. Enjambement, or the cutting of lines that do not fit into syntactic units, can create tension or surprise in the reading. All these elements work together to form a poem's structure that not only affects how the poem is read, but also how its meaning is conveyed. The arrangement and manipulation of these structural components not only shape the physical form of the poem on paper, but also affect its rhythm, tempo, and overall flow. Sense devices are a type of device concerned with creating vivid sensory experiences and conveying meaning through imagery and figurative language. This category encompasses a variety of techniques, including visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory imagery, as well as symbolism, metaphor, simile, and personification (Lakoff & Turner, 1989).

Visual imagery, for example, can bring scenes to life in the reader's mind, while auditory imagery can evoke sounds that accompany the poetic experience (Nöth, 2019). The use of metaphor and simile allows the poet to make unexpected comparisons, expanding the reader's understanding of the subject depicted (Semino, 2022). Symbolism, on the other hand, allows specific objects or ideas to represent broader or abstract concepts, adding depth to the interpretation of the poem. Personification, by giving human characteristics to inanimate objects or abstract concepts, can create a stronger emotional connection between the reader and the elements in the poem. The use of synesthesia, where one type of sensory experience is described in terms usually associated with another sense, can create powerful and unexpected poetic effects.

The third category is sound devices, focusing on the auditory aspects of poetry. It includes techniques such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia, and rhythm. These devices contribute significantly to the musicality of a poem, creating sound patterns that can enhance its emotional impact and readability. Sound devices can mimic the subject of the poem, create atmosphere, or emphasize certain words or phrases, thus enriching the overall poetic experience. Ramazani (2020) argues that sound devices play a vital role in shaping the "sonic landscape" of poetry, which not only reinforces semantic meaning but also creates additional layers of meaning through acoustic resonance. Alliteration and assonance, for example, can create diverse rhythmic effects and vocal harmonies, depending on the sounds repeated. Onomatopoeia allows the poet to bring the auditory dimension directly into the text, creating a multi-sensory experience for the reader. Meanwhile, rhythms formed from stress patterns and

pauses not only affect the way a poem is read but can also reflect the physical or emotional movements depicted in the poem.

Through the complex interplay of structural, sense, and sound devices, poets are able to create works that are not only aesthetically beautiful, but also rich in meaning and emotional resonance. These three categories of literary devices work synergistically, forming the foundation, body, and soul of the poem, allowing the reader to experience the poem not just as a string of words, but as a full sensory and intellectual experience. Understanding how these three devices work and interact provides a valuable tool for critics and readers to appreciate the depth and complexity of poetic works, while paving the way for a more in-depth and comprehensive analysis of literary works.

### **Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance**

The Harlem Renaissance was a cultural movement that flourished in the 1920s and 1930s, playing an important role in shaping African-American literature and art. This period witnessed an unprecedented surge of expressiveness among African-American writers, artists, and musicians, centered primarily in Harlem, New York (Hutchinson, 2020). The movement was characterized by a celebration of black identity, a renewed interest in African heritage, and a bold assertion of artistic and intellectual greatness. Langston Hughes stands out as one of the most prominent figures of this era. Born in 1902, Hughes' life and work were closely linked to the ethos of the Harlem Renaissance. His poetry, in particular, embodies the spirit of cultural pride and social consciousness of the movement. Hughes' literary contributions are wide and varied, ranging from poetry and short stories to plays and essays, all of which reflect his commitment to portraying the African-American experience authentically. Hughes not only wrote about the African-American experience, but he was also active in promoting and supporting other African-American artists and writers. His influence extended far beyond literary circles, making him an important cultural figure who helped shape the discourse on racial identity and justice in America.

A distinctive feature of Hughes' work is the profound influence of blues and jazz music. These musical forms, rooted in African-American culture, significantly shaped the style and themes of Hughes' poetry. As Chinitz (2018) notes, Hughes incorporated the rhythms, structures, and emotional resonances of blues and jazz into his poetry, creating a unique literary voice that bridged the gap between music and the written word. Hughes' use of musical elements also serves as a metaphor for the African-American experience. Blues, with its themes of sadness and resilience, and jazz, with its improvisation and freedom, became powerful tools for Hughes to express the complexities of African-American life (Borshuk, 2020). The integration of music into Hughes' poetry reflects his philosophy of art rooted in everyday life experiences. He saw blues and jazz not just as forms of entertainment, but as authentic expressions of the African-American psyche - a way to convey the joys, sorrows, and struggles of the community in a way that traditional artistic forms could not (Tidwell & Ragar, 2007).

In the context of the Harlem Renaissance, literary devices had special significance as tools for asserting cultural identity and challenging prevailing stereotypes. Hughes, as a key figure of the movement, used literary devices with great skill to achieve these goals. The use of vernacular language and dialectical speech patterns by writers of this era, including Hughes, served to authentically represent the African-American voice. Hughes carefully integrated imagery,

personification, and allusion to bring the African-American experience to life and connect it to the broader cultural context (Miller, 2023). Hughes' innovation in blending traditional poetic structures with jazz and blues rhythms not only reflected the creative spirit of the Harlem Renaissance, but also served as a form of social critique. The use of literary devices by Hughes and his peers went beyond aesthetic functions; it became a means to validate the African-American experience and challenge existing cultural hierarchies. Through the careful manipulation of literary devices, Hughes created poetry that was not only aesthetically beautiful but also culturally rich and politically powerful, contributing to the decolonization of language and literary form.

Hughes thus helped expand the definition of what could be considered poetic material. The poem also reflects broader tensions in American society at the time - between tradition and modernity, between segregation and integration, between suffering and hope. In this way, "The Weary Blues" is not only a poem about a blues piano player, but it is also a powerful commentary on the condition of African-Americans and the transformation of culture.

### **Reader Response to "The Weary Blues"**

Understanding how readers respond to Langston Hughes' "The Weary Blues" is important to appreciate the impact and relevance of this poem. Reader response theory emphasizes that the meaning of poetry is formed through the interaction between the text and the reader. In the context of "The Weary Blues", this means that the reading experience can vary greatly depending on the reader's background and knowledge.

The reader's cultural background plays a key role in the interpretation of Hughes' poetry. Readers familiar with blues music and African-American history may pick up on nuances that other readers may miss. However, Hughes' poetic power is often able to transcend these cultural differences, allowing a wide range of readers to connect with the emotions and images he conveys (Farris, 2016). plus, the literary devices Hughes uses, such as blues-like rhythms and the use of colloquial language, have a huge impact on the reader's experience. These elements not only make the poem aesthetically appealing, but also help the reader "feel" the music and atmosphere Hughes describes (Chinitz, 2017).

This shows that despite being written almost a century ago, Hughes' poetry still has the power to speak to readers today. Understanding how readers interact with "The Weary Blues" not only enhances our appreciation of Hughes' work, but also shows how poetry can bridge differences in time and culture, creating meaningful connections between writers and readers from different backgrounds.

### **METHOD**

This study applies a qualitative approach that focuses on an in-depth analysis of the text of the poem "The Weary Blues" by Langston Hughes (Hughes, 1926), with the aim of exploring and understanding the use of literary devices in the work. As the main analytical framework, the study employs the theory developed by L.G. Alexander (1990), who offers a comprehensive categorization of literary devices into three distinction groups: structural devices relating to the form and structure of the poem, sensory devices involving sensory and imaginative aspects, and sound devices relating to auditory and musical elements in the poem.

The main methodology applied in this study is the close reading technique, an approach that allows for in-depth identification and analysis of the various literary devices used by Hughes in his work. After the identification process, the literary devices are classified and analyzed according to Alexander's theoretical framework, which allows for a more structured and systematic understanding of Hughes' poetic strategies. In addition, to provide a richer context and a more comprehensive understanding, the analysis also considers the historical and cultural background of the Harlem Renaissance era, a period that greatly influenced and shaped Hughes' works.

The primary source of this research is the text of the poem "The Weary Blues" itself, which is analyzed thoroughly and in depth. However, to enrich the analysis and provide a broader perspective, the research also utilizes a variety of secondary sources, including critical literature that discusses Hughes' work in particular and African-American modernist poetry in general. Furthermore, in order to understand how the literary devices employed by Hughes may influence readers' interpretation and appreciation of his poetry, this study also integrates aspects of reader reception theory, which provides insight into the process of interaction between the poetic text and its readers.

## FINDINGS

An analysis of the poem "The Weary Blues" by Langston Hughes reveals the use of complex and interrelated literary devices. Based on L.G. Alexander's theory, these devices are categorized into three main groups: structural devices, sound devices, and sense devices. The following are the results of the analysis for each category:

### Structural Devices

Structural devices play a key role in shaping the framework and rhythm of "The Weary Blues". Hughes uses a variety of structural techniques to create patterns and rhythms that reflect the characteristics of blues music. The analysis shows significant use of repetition, rhyme, rhythmic patterns, and parallelism. Table 1 presents a summary of the structural devices found in this poem, along with specific examples from the text.

**Table 1.** Analysis of the Structural Devices

Structural Devices			
Repetition	Rhyme	Rhythmic	Parallelism
"He did a lazy sway.... He did a lazy sway..." <b>(Line 6-7)</b>	"Down on Lenox Avenue the other <b>night</b> By the pale dull pallor of an old gas <b>light</b> "	"Droning a drowsy syncopated tune, Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon."	"He did a lazy sway. . . . . . He did a lazy sway. . . ."
"Got the weary Blues and I can't be satisfied. Got the Weary Blues And can't be satisfied" <b>(Line 26-29)</b>	"I got the Weary Blues And I can't be <b>satisfied.</b> "		"Got the Weary Blues And I can't be satisfied. Got the Weary Blues And can't be satisfied—"
"Thump, thump,			

<i>thump”(Line 27</i>	<p><i>Got the Weary Blues          And can't be  <b>satisfied</b></i></p> <p><i>“Thump, thump,          thump, went his foot          on the <b>floor</b>.          He played a few          chords then he sang          some <b>more</b>”</i></p>		<p><i>"Ain't got nobody in          all this world,          Ain't got nobody but          ma self."</i></p>
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### Repetition

Repetition emerges as the dominant element in this poem. The phrase “*He did a lazy sway.... He did a lazy sway...*” repeated in lines 6-7 serves two functions: first, it describes the repetitive and lazy movements of the blues musician, and second, it creates a hypnotic effect that reflects the meditative nature of blues music. The repetition of “*Got the Weary Blues and I can't be satisfied. Got the Weary Blues And can't be satisfied*” in lines 26-29 emphasizes the persistent emotional states of exhaustion and dissatisfaction that are at the core of the blues experience. The repetition of “*Thump, thump, thump*” in line 27 effectively mimics the constant and repetitive rhythm typical in blues music, as if bringing the reader directly into the musical performance.

### Rhyme

Rhyme in this poem also plays an important role in creating musicality. Rhyming word pairs such as “*night*” and “*light*”, “*Blues*” and “*satisfied*”, and “*floor*” and “*more*” not only create harmony of sound, but also reinforce the relationship of meaning between the words. The rhyme between “*Blues*” and “*satisfied*” emphasizes the paradox in blues - a genre of music that often expresses dissatisfaction yet gives satisfaction in its expression.

### Rhythmic

The rhythmic patterns in this poem strongly reflect the rhythm of blues music. Lines like “*Droning a drowsy syncopated tune*” and “*Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon*” not only verbally describe the music, but also mimic the syncopated rhythm of the blues in the language structure. The use of words like “*drowsy*” and “*mellow*” also adds an auditory feel that enriches the reading experience.

### Parelism

Parallelism is used to reinforce the main themes of the poem. “*He did a lazy sway... He did a lazy sway...*” emphasizes the monotony and repetition in the musician's movements, reflecting the hypnotic nature of blues music. “*Got the Weary Blues... And I can't be satisfied. Got the Weary Blues... And can't be satisfied*” reinforces the constant feeling of fatigue and dissatisfaction, a central theme in the blues. “*Ain't got nobody in all this world, Ain't got nobody but ma self*” reinforces the theme of loneliness and isolation that is a frequent subject in the blues, illustrating a personal experience that is universal in the blues tradition.

### Sound Devices

The sound devices in “The Weary Blues” play an important role in creating a rich auditory landscape, capturing the essence of blues music in written form. Hughes uses a variety of techniques to bring out the sonic qualities of the blues, including alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhyme, assonance and rhythm. Table 2 summarizes the sound devices found in this poem.

**Table 2.** Analysis of the Sound Devices

Sound Devices	Alliteration	<u>D</u> roning a <u>d</u> rowsy syncopated tune <u>P</u> ale dull <u>p</u> allor of an old gas light He made that <u>p</u> oor <u>p</u> iano moan with melody <u>W</u> hile the <u>W</u> eary Blues echoed through his head.
	Onomatopoeia	<u>D</u> roning a drowsy syncopated tune. Rocking back and forth to a mellow <u>croon</u> . <u>Thump, thump, thump</u> , went his foot on the floor. While the Weary Blues <u>echoed</u> through his head.
	Rhyme	Tune, croon Night, light Sway, blues Stool, fool Tone, moan Floor, more
	Assonance	By the <u>p</u> ale dull <u>p</u> allor of an <u>o</u> ld <u>g</u> as light To the <u>t</u> une o' those Weary <u>B</u> lues He made that <u>p</u> oor <u>p</u> iano <u>m</u> oan with melody
	Rhythm	<b>D</b> roning a <b>d</b> rowsy <b>s</b> yncopated <b>t</b> une, <b>R</b> ocking <b>b</b> ack and <b>f</b> orth to a <b>m</b> ellow <b>c</b> roon, <b>I</b> heard a <b>N</b> egro <b>p</b> lay He <b>p</b> layed that <b>s</b> ad raggy tune like a <b>m</b> usical <b>f</b> ool And <b>f</b> ar into the <b>n</b> ight he <b>c</b> rooned that <b>t</b> une.

### Alliteration

Alliteration is used extensively to create musical effects and strengthen the atmosphere. In this Poem, there are some prominent sentences for alliteration namely “*Droning a drowsy*” with the repetition of the 'd' sound creating a drowsy and monotonous effect, “*pale dull pallor*” with the 'p' and 'l' sounds depicting dim light, “*While the Weary Blues echoed*” with the 'w' sound creating an echo effect, and “*He made that poor piano moan with melody*” with the 'p' and 'm' sounds reinforcing the melodic and melancholic impression. This use of alliteration not only adds to the musicality of the poem but also helps to establish the atmosphere typical of a blues performance.

### Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is used to directly mimic sounds in the poem, bringing the reader closer to the auditory experience of the blues. “Droning” imitates a monotonous and continuous sound, ‘croon’ describes soft and melancholic singing, ‘Thump, thump, thump’ directly imitates the

tapping of feet on the floor, and ‘echoed’ describes sounds that reverberate. This use of onomatopoeia allows the reader to “hear” blues music through words.

### Rhyme

The rhymes in this poem not only create musicality but also strengthen the relationship of meaning. Word pairs such as *'tune'* and *'croon'*, *'night'* and *'light'*, *'sway'* and *'blues'*, *'stool'* and *'fool'*, *'tone'* and *'moan'*, and *'floor'* and *'more'* were found to enrich the experience of reading the poem and emphasize the relationship between the concepts being rhymed, forming a significant harmony of sound in the whole work.”

### Assonance

Assonance is used to create subtle vocal harmonies in the poem. In this poem there are lines “By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light” with repetition of 'a' and 'o' sounds, “To the tune o' those Weary Blues” with 'u' sound, and “He made that poor piano moan with melody” with 'a' and 'o' sounds. These sounds create vocal resonance as well as harmony when reading them which then enriches the sound texture of the poem.

### Rhythmic

The overall rhythm of the poem strongly resembles that of the blues. This is seen in word emphasis patterns and line structures such as “Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,” and “Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,”. The use of words like “syncopated,” “rocking,” and “crooned” directly refer to the musical elements, while the patterns of emphasis in these lines create a distinctive rhythm, mimicking the rhythm of the blues.

### Sense Devices

Sense devices in “The Weary Blues” play an important role in creating an experience rich in sensory sensations, allowing the reader to feel the atmosphere Hughes describes deeply. The sense devices serve as powerful tools for creating vivid sensory impressions, allowing readers to not just understand but to viscerally experience the scene Hughes portrays

Through masterful deployment of imagery, symbolism, and figurative language, Hughes constructs a multi-sensory experience that brings the Harlem nightclub setting to life. Table 3 presents a comprehensive analysis of the sense devices employed throughout the work.

**Table 3. Analysis of the Sense Devices**

Sense Devices					
Simile	Metaphor	Personification	Imagery	Symbolism	Sinesthesia
He slept like a <b>rock or a man that's dead.</b> (Line 35)	He made that poor piano <b>moan with melody (Line 10)</b>  <b>Weary Blues</b>	He made that <b>poor piano moan</b> with melody (Line 10)  The stars went out and so did the moon. (Line 32)	By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light (line 5)  He did a lazy sway (Line 6-7)	Weary Blues  ebony hands on each ivory key (Line 9)	pale dull pallor of an old gas light (Line 5)  In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone" (Line 17)

		While the Weary Blues echoed through his head. (Line 34)	Droning a drowsy syncopated tune (Line 1)  Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool (Line 12)		
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### Simile

The simile used in this poem, “He slept like a rock or a man that's dead,” is very effective in describing the depth of the musician's sleep. The comparison to a rock implies total immobility and deep tranquillity, depicting how deep and undisturbed his sleep was. The addition of “or a man that's dead” further emphasizes this motionless nature, adding a more somber feel. This simile not only describes the musician's physical state, but also implies the emotional and physical impact of an intense blues performance. It shows how the music has drained all of his life energy, as if the performance has left him in a state of extreme exhaustion.

### Metaphor

The metaphor “He made that poor piano moan with melody” personifies the piano by giving it the ability to “moan”. The use of the word “poor piano” gives the instrument a sentimental quality, as if it were a suffering creature. The phrase “moan with melody” creates a powerful paradox, combining the sound of pain with the beauty of music, reflecting the nature of the blues which often expresses sadness through beautiful melodies. This metaphor conveys the emotional intensity of the musician's playing, showing how he transfers his feelings to the instrument, making the piano seem to feel and express his emotions. Meanwhile, the metaphor “Weary Blues” represents more than just a type of music. Describing the blues not just as a musical genre, but as an emotional state, this metaphor implies the emotional baggage that blues music carries, reflecting the experiences and struggles of the African-American community.

### Personification

Personification in this poem gives life to lifeless objects and abstract concepts. The example “The stars went out and so did the moon” gives human actions to celestial bodies. The use of the phrase “went out” which is usually used for lights or fire, applied to the stars and the moon, implies that the universe itself responds to music. It is as if depicting the stars and moon as a tired audience that finally “goes home” after the show is over. Another personification, “While the Weary Blues echoed through his head,” gives “Weary Blues” a physical quality. The use of the word “echoed” which usually refers to sound bouncing in physical space, is applied to the musician's mind, illustrating how the music continues to “play” in his mind even after the show is over. This personification emphasizes the profound and ongoing impact the music has on the musician, illustrating how the blues became an integral part of his consciousness.

### **Imagery**

The poem is rich in imagery that appeals to the senses. Visual imagery such as “By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light” creates the impression of a weak and lifeless light, adding an element of nostalgia and decline, and creating a gloomy and melancholic atmosphere that reflects the mood of the blues. Kinesthetic imagery “He did a lazy sway” depicts slow and leisurely movements, implying the slow rhythm of the blues and perhaps also the musician's fatigue. Auditory imagery “Droning a drowsy syncopated tune” describes the sound of the music very effectively. The word “droning” implies a monotonous and continuous sound, “drowsy” adds a sense of lethargy, while “syncopated” describes an irregular rhythm, a typical characteristic of the blues. A combination of kinesthetic and tactile imagery is seen in “Swaying to and from on his rickety stool”, where repetitive motion is depicted along with the sense of instability and perhaps also poverty implied by the “rickety stool”.

### **Symbolism**

The symbolism in this poem adds a deeper layer of meaning. “Weary Blues” becomes a symbol rich in meaning, representing not only the African-American musical tradition, but also symbolizing the struggle, fatigue, and resilience of the African-American community. It illustrates how music becomes a channel to express difficult life experiences. Another powerful symbol is the “ebony hands on each ivory key”, which creates a striking visual contrast. The “ebony hands” represent black musicians, while the “ivory keys” represent instruments traditionally associated with European classical music. This contrast symbolizes the confluence of cultures and music's ability to bridge racial differences, showing how art can bring together disparate elements.

### **Synaesthesia**

The use of synaesthesia in this poem creates a strong poetic effect by combining different sensory experiences. In the phrase “pale dull pallor of an old gas light”, the visual experience (“pale” and “dull”) is combined with the tactile experience (“pallor” which usually refers to skin color). This creates a richer and more complex description of the light. Another example, “In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone”, combines an auditory experience (“deep song voice”) with an emotional experience (“melancholy tone”). This combination allows the reader to not only “hear” the voice in the poem, but also “feel” the emotions contained within.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

Analysis of “The Weary Blues” through the perspective of L.G. Alexander's categorization of literary devices reveals Langston Hughes' skill in using structural devices, sound, and meaning to create a rich multisensory experience, which enhances the reader's understanding and appreciation of the poem.

### **Structural Devices and Poetic Architecture**

The structural devices Hughes uses serve as the framework of “The Weary Blues,” creating a structure that reflects the rhythmic and repetitive nature of blues music. The extensive use of repetition, especially in phrases such as “He did a lazy sway...” and “Got the Weary Blues and

can't be satisfied," not only echoes the cyclical pattern of blues music but also emphasizes the persistent emotional state that is at the core of the blues experience. This repetition aids the reader's understanding by reinforcing key themes and creating a hypnotic effect that draws the reader into the atmosphere of a blues performance.

Rhyme schemes and rhythmic patterns further contribute to the musicality of the poem, making it more accessible and memorable to the reader. By incorporating these structural elements, Hughes creates a poetic form that is closely aligned with the musical genre it describes, allowing the reader to experience the essence of blues music through the structure of the poem itself. This alignment between form and content enhances the reader's appreciation by providing a more immersive and authentic experience of the blues aesthetic.

### **Sound Devices and Auditory Landscape**

The sound devices in "The Weary Blues" play an important role in creating a vivid auditory landscape that brings the poem to life. The extensive use of alliteration, onomatopoeia, and assonance not only enhances the musicality of the poem but also helps the reader "hear" the blues performances depicted. For example, the alliteration in "Droning a drowsy syncopated tune" and the onomatopoeia in "Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor" create a sonic texture that mimics the sound of a live blues performance.

These sound devices contribute significantly to the reader's comprehension by engaging the auditory imagination, allowing the reader to experience the poem not only visually but also aurally. This multisensory engagement deepens readers' connection with the text and enhances their appreciation of Hughes' skill in translating musical experience into poetic form. The careful orchestration of these sound devices demonstrates Hughes' ability to bridge the gap between music and poetry, making the blues experience accessible even to readers unfamiliar with the genre.

### **Sense devices Meaning Devices and Emotional Resonance**

Hughes employs, including vivid imagery, powerful metaphors, and evocative personification, create a rich tapestry of sensory and emotional experiences. The metaphor "poor piano moaned with melody" and the personification of Weary Blues "echoing through his head" not only paint vivid images but also convey the deep emotional resonance of the blues. These devices aid the reader's understanding by providing concrete and relatable ways to grasp abstract concepts and emotions.

The use of symbolism, especially in the contrast between "ebony hands" and "ivory keys," adds layers of meaning that invite deeper interpretation and reflection. This complexity enhances reader appreciation by offering multiple levels of engagement with the text, from surface-level enjoyment of imagery to deeper contemplation of the poem's cultural and historical significance.

By skillfully integrating structural devices, sound, and meaning, Hughes creates poems that are both accessible and profound. The musicality of the poem, achieved through its structural and sound devices, makes it instantly appealing and memorable. This accessibility serves as an entry point for readers, inviting them into the world of the blues and the African-American experience it represents.

At the same time, the rich imagery and symbolism offer depth and complexity that rewards closer reading and analysis. This layered approach to poetic composition enhances the reader's

appreciation by providing multiple pathways to engage with the text. Readers can appreciate the surface-level beauty of the poem while also diving into deeper cultural and emotional resonances.

Furthermore, Hughes' use of vernacular language and blues-inspired rhythms in conjunction with these literary devices creates an authentic representation of the African-American voice and experience. This authenticity not only enhances the poem's cultural significance but also invites readers to engage with perspectives and experiences that may differ from their own, encouraging greater cultural understanding and appreciation.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research highlights how Langston Hughes uses literary devices in *The Weary Blues* to create an immersive aesthetic experience, enhancing the reader's understanding of the themes, culture and emotional nuances in his poetry. Through the use of structural devices, sound, and meaning, Hughes presents a dimension that enriches the reading, bringing the reader to experience the depth of rhythm, visualization, and emotion of the work.

The structural devices Hughes uses reflect the characteristics of blues music, reinforcing the themes of exhaustion and disappointment that are at the heart of the poem. The structure of the poem not only forms a strong framework, but also brings the reader into the atmosphere of a blues performance, providing a hypnotic effect that makes them feel as if they are part of the experience.

The sound devices create a vivid auditory landscape, allowing the reader to “hear” the blues music in the text. Through the element of sound, Hughes is able to connect the worlds of music and poetry, allowing readers who may not be familiar with the blues genre to still understand and feel its essence. This device also bridges cultural and temporal differences, keeping the poem relevant to today's readers.

Meanwhile, sense devices such as imagery, symbolism, metaphor, and personification add emotional depth and open up various interpretive layers in the poem. Symbolism and metaphor present visual contrasts that symbolize the unity of different cultures, while imagery and personification create a strong emotional connection with the reader. With these devices, Hughes not only depicts the lives and emotional struggles of the African-American community, but also reflects how music and poetry can serve as a bridge between cultures.

Overall, this study confirms that the literary devices in *The Weary Blues* are not just embellishments, but tools that strengthen the reading experience as well as enhance the poem's cultural relevance. With the integration of structural devices, sound, and meaning, Hughes produces a poem that is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also rich in meaning and emotional resonance. The authenticity of sound in language and rhythm invites the reader to appreciate the experiences of the African-American community, as well as opening up insights into the complexities of identity and cultural struggles reflected in this work.

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