Ocean

Hope. Hope makes the struggles of this dark and dreary world seemingly fade away. Without hope, the merciless ocean of life consumes its victims without any remorse. Langston Hughes’ poem “Island” depicts the importance of hope within the midst of sorrow and discouragement, and the realization of relief waiting to be discovered in the future. “Hughes struggled with a sense of desolation fostered by parental neglect. He himself recalled being driven early by his loneliness to books, and the wonderful world in books” (Rampersad 3). During Langston’s childhood, he dealt with constant moving from home to home, the separation of his parents, and the death of his grandmother. “At an early age his parents separated… his grandmother, Mary Langston, passed away when he was 12” (Kozel). Langston had experienced the waves of sorrow within his own life. He kept hope through his love of literature and eventually made it to the comforting sands of his island. When facing hardships in life, we, as humans, should possess hope to overcome, appreciate the island’s fair sands once reached, and help others to also overcome the hardships of life.

In the blink of an eye, we can find ourselves battling an unexpected hardship. Langston Hughes compared coping with a grief to struggling in the vast, overwhelming ocean. “Wave of sorrow/ Do not drown me now” (Hughes l. 1-2). Whenever we find ourselves struggling with a hardship, we often plead that the hardship will not become too much for us to bear. We often find hope in a greater power such as God to help us conquer a struggle. “While the sufferer may
not understand the reason for his hardships, he can find peace in knowing that God is in control” (Flake para. 3). Many people that are suddenly facing a hardship find themselves wanting to give up. They look to God to help them keep fighting. People also find support in their friends and family. Words of encouragement, a pat on the back, or a shoulder to cry on are ways our friends and family help us overcome a hardship. Although the hardship may not indefinitely disappear, the love and support of others and our own self initiative may be the keys to surviving. “Wave of sorrow/ Take me there” (Hughes l: 7-8). In order to make it to the island, we must overcome the wave or sorrow we are facing. The wave will take us to our resting place upon the island. For some people, the wave is sorrow is too much for them to bear. They cannot find it in themselves to overcome the hardship and drown in the merciless ocean. We must always keep hope that we will eventually make it to our island of relief.

Some people that face struggles keep hope throughout their experience and eventually find relief. Langston Hughes refers to this relief as the sandy shores of an island. “I see the island/ And its sands are fair” (Hughes l: 5-6). Hughes describes the sands as “fair”. He could have easily used words such as; beautiful, magnificent, or tremendous. I believe that Hughes referred to the sands as fair because he is avoiding associating the island’s sands to material possessions of life. Many people in today’s society have not experienced hardships and struggles in their life. They take the small things in life for granted and forget to remember those who are drowning in the ocean. I believe that he used to word “fair” to symbolize the simple things in life instead of highlighting the glamorous substances. Whenever we finally overcome a struggle or hardship, it is our duty to be thankful and appreciative of life itself. Without the ocean, I believe that people would become unappreciative, selfish beings. The ocean is present to remind us to always be thankful for the important things such as; family, friends, food, shelter, and health.
Sometime we get too caught up in the superficial obsessions of life such as; money, clothes, appearance, and status. Although the ocean can be dreadful and vindictive at times, its waves of sorrow remind us to love one another and recognize the blessings of life.

Once a person has found relief on the island, they should not simply prop open a beach chair and enjoy the sunshine all day. Our civic duty as an overcomer of the ocean is to help others who are struggling in its overwhelming waves. When we were drowning in the vast, dark waves, friends, family, or God came to our rescue to support us and give us hope. Truly appreciating the island is best exemplified by helping others to also reach its fair sands. We as humans should strive to be remembered as an individual that insisted on helping others. It is very common for someone that has never experienced a tremendous hardship to simply ignore the hurting and struggling of another person. Often times, the individuals that are most helpful towards others are the ones that have experienced the greatest sorrows.

Over all, the poem “Island” is a great reminder for anyone who is struggling with a hardship to keep hope. No matter what hardship it is that we are facing, we should always keep the island in sight. A quote from Kobi Yamada accurately illustrates the underlying theme of Langston Hughes poem “Island.” He said, “Believe that there's light at the end of the tunnel. Believe that you might be that light for someone else” (Yamada). If everyone in our world were a light for someone else, we would not lose a single soul to the unforgiving ocean. When coping with a hardship in life, we should always keep hope to pull through, be grateful for outlasting our hard times of life, and succumb to helping others conquer their own hardships. Although the ocean of life can be depressing at times, it reminds us to love one another and never take anything for granted.
Works Cited


