

HARLEM AS A METAPHOR IN ANN PETRY'S 'THE STREET'

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ABSTRACT

The Harlem Renaissance, a cultural movement which brought out the literary interest of many black American writers is the theme behind many novels written in the period 1920-1935. This study aims at bringing out the allegory of Harlem in Ann Petry's novel *The Street*. It also aims at highlighting the author's views on Harlem and how the author has used her proficiencies in the novel to convey her views on life in Harlem. Petry uses a powerful story line to put in her views about Harlem and the story line clearly explains the fate of people living in Harlem due to social and cultural issues of the place.

Ann Petry is the first ever African woman writer for crossing the book sales over a million for her novel *The Street*. Her father was a pharmacist and her mother an entrepreneur. In her novel, *The Street* she elaborates her views on the ordeal for day to day survival of a black woman on the streets of Harlem. Harlem is the northern part of America which served as a major black residential and community center. The name Harlem is derived from the Dutch city of Netherlands 'Haarlem'. It suffered a great deal of cultural and social damages after the Second World War and the Great Depression. Poverty and Crimes increased during this tenure with less significant development.

The author in her novel, *The Street*, highlights the jeopardy faced by a single black woman in the struggle to survive along with her son. The story line is drawn around the cultural and ethical issues in Harlem which clearly states the life of black people living there and how the white population exploit and use them for their benefits. Adding up to the issues like racism and sexual exploitation of black women, the great depression upsurges the crime rate in areas like Harlem, where black men engage in lot of crimes and anti-social activities. The novel is not only about the struggle of a single black mother but it also aims to highlight the darker sides of the society where social issues are shaking people's lives. The author is very sincere and honest in her attempt to highlight the social issues prevailing in the streets of Harlem.

KEYWORDS: Race, Social Realism, Haarlem, Ann Petry's, *The Street* and *The Narrows*