

# OPTIONAL ASSESSMENT

Amiri Baraka's "Dope"

- For the **C**      Make a strong attempt [*full answers that reflect thought and research*] to complete Part I or Part II.  
For the **B**      Successfully complete [*full and accurate responses*] either Part I or Part II.  
For the **A**      Successfully complete both Part I and Part II

## **PART I**      **CONTENT ANALYSIS**

1. Baraka fills his poem with historical allusions, or references, that add weight to the poem. He expects readers to understand how each allusion fit within the context of the poem. Select 4 of the following prompts about allusions to answer.
  - a. John D. Rockefeller, Pierre du Pont, Andrew Mellon and J.P. Morgan. Who were these men, and why does Baraka include them in the poem?
  - b. Stepin Fetchit and Sleep 'n Eat: Who were they, and why does Baraka include them in the poem? And what about Amos Pootbootie, Genevieve Almoswhite, and Winky Suckass: Who are they, and why are they a significant piece of the poem?
  - c. Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, John and Robert Kennedy, Pablo Neruda, Salvadore Allende and Patrice Lumumba. Identify each of these men, and then explain why they are grouped together in the poem.
  - d. Ian Smith and B.J. Vorster. Identify each man, and then explain why they are in Baraka's poem.
  - e. Richard Nixon, H.R. Haldeman, John Dean, and J. Edgar Hoover. Baraka believes these were leaders within the American government who "lied" and abused their authority. How??? Discuss some of the historical controversy surrounding these men. [Hint: Nixon, Haldeman, and Dean are all connected to the same scandal. Discuss them together. Then discuss the sketchy practices of Hoover.]
  - f. Baraka repeats the "Jimmy Carter wouldn't lie." a) What is it about Jimmy Carter that would make the poem's audience likely to believe this statement? b) What is Baraka really saying?
  - g. Who was Reverend Ike, and why is he referenced in this poem?
2. Baraka alludes to news and entertainment media. The reader can infer that Baraka was critical of the media. How so? THINK: According to the poem, what role has the news/entertainment media played in shaping ideas within the black community? Cite and explain evidence.
3. What's with all of the hyper-expressive OWOW!'s and YES!'s??? What is Baraka's purpose in putting them into (and repeating them throughout) the poem? [Hint: He is placing the reader within a particular setting. What is that setting? How do you *know* it's the setting – what other lines/phrases/words in the poem prove it's the setting?]

## **PART II**      **CENTRAL CLAIM**

4. What institution does Baraka accuse of prolonging the oppression of black America in the late 1970s? Write an essay using the structure below. (*For letters B, C, and D be sure to cite & explain evidence from the poem.*)
  - a. Introduction paragraph (2-4 sentences). Assert a clear thesis in response to the question above.
  - b. Body paragraph #1: Explain how the government, economy, and media oppress Black America.
  - c. Body paragraph #2: Identify the institution that Baraka accuses of prolonging black suffering.
  - d. Body paragraph #3: Explain why Baraka believes this institution *slings dope*. What does it gain?
  - e. Conclusion & Evaluation: Briefly summarize Baraka argument. Then offer your own judgment: Is Baraka persuasive? Does he offer a sufficient amount of evidence to prove his argument?