

Notes on Mr. T by Terrance Hayes:

Terrance Hayes' poem, Mr. T, addresses a pop culture icon and critiques that icon's place in history in regards to African American culture. The poem begins playfully descriptive but finishes with serious questions and sarcastic answers that leave the impression of this icon as being ridiculous. There is no set rhythm or rhyme scheme; however there are some moments that have a music quality, "steam engine's imagination" and "skulls migration." "Sometimes drugged and duffel (by white men)," identifies the racially charged theme of the poem. This line is particularly important because it makes sure to identify these men as being white. Hayes then poses a question and answer that implies theatrical Hollywood hero is a foolish role model for "skinny B-Boys" from Chicago or inner city youth. The poem does an interesting job of setting up the character in question and painting an image of a person that balances between pop culture hero and irresponsible role model. The reference to being made of steam engine's imagination and being half John Henry identifies this man as a tall tale creation and a foolish one at that.