# Writers As Social Critics

A large percentage of famous writers are social critics. They adore pinpointing the factors that result in a society having a flawed social structure. This paper identifies Walt Witman and Langston Hughes as two writers who were social critics and further explains their opinions on the social trends in the American society, which they believed were flawed.

Walt Whitman realized that the American society used people’s wealth to define their worth. Individuals looked down upon people in low social classes, and respected people from high social classes. And so, Whitman was against the way people respected individuals from a noble ancestry. The American society used an individual’s ancestry to determine his or her worth. Walt Whitman opposed this phenomenon because he believed that an individual’s worth should not be determined by his ancestry or wealth. In the ‘Leaves of Grass,’ Whitman wrote that he hopes for, ‘a new type of society where wealth and ancestry do not determine a person's wealth.’ Whitman also realized that Americans believed that the intelligent individuals are those in high social rankings. Whitman opposed this belief because he trusted that the most intelligent Americans were the common folks. In the Introduction to ‘Leaves of Grass,’ Walt Whitman wrote that the genius of the United States is not only executives or legislatures, ambassadors, or authors (Whitman 1).

Whitman was also against the American idea of democracy. He believed that the ‘rule of the majority,’ is a poor definition of democracy. According to him, democracy only occurs when there is there is equality among individuals of a particular nation. He revealed that in a democratic society, nobody is considered to be of a higher value than other individuals. For instance, the president should be given equal treatment with a farmer. Hence, he believed that democracy meant the equal treatment of individuals regardless of their religion, gender, or sex.

Besides Walt Whitman, Langston Hughes, an author, was also a social critic. In ‘Let America be America again,’ he writes, ‘let America be the dream, dreamers build,’ because he believes that America is not what it claims to be. The American society believes that they are living the American dream but Hughes believes that the American society never adheres to the values of freedom, justice, and liberty. He is also against the belief that America is a free society. When democracy was introduced in America, the American society was happy because people believed they were free. However, Hughes claims that America’s freedom is illusory because many people are suffering in the nation. He claims that people cannot claim to be free in a nation where the government shoots those who fight for their rights. In his poem, he writes, ‘Who said they are free? The millions shot down when we strike (Hughes 2)?’Hughes believes that free people are those who have something to show for the money they have earned. Therefore, the American society lacks freedom because workers and farmers constantly complain about their working conditions. Besides this, Hughes claims that many foreigners come to America because they believe that working in America promises progress. However, these immigrants never find what they sought in America. In ‘Let America be America Again,’ Hughes writes, ‘I am the immigrant grasping the hope I seek’ (Hughes 1).

Although the American society believes that its leaders often strive to provide it with opportunities. Hughes believes that American leaders are tyrants who ensure that Americans never get opportunities. In the poem, he writes, ‘where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme’ (Hughes 1).

In conclusion, Walt Whitman was mainly against the society using wealth and ancestral backgrounds as an indicator of an individual’s worth. He believed that every individual including poor people is worthy and intelligent. Conversely, Hughes disagrees with the fact that America is a free nation because it is led by tyrants.

## Works Cited

Hughes, Langstone. *Let America Be America Again*. New York: Hearst Corporation, 1936, Print.

Whitman, Walt. *Leaves of Grass*. 1855, Print.