

LOVE IN L.A.

Study Questions
NICOLE
RUMORE

MARY
SANDRI

October 29, 2008

AP English 4

By: Dagoberto Gilb

Terms

Theme

The central idea or meaning of a story which provides a unifying point around which the plot, characters, setting, point of view, symbols, and other elements of the story are organized. The theme can be explicitly stated or presented implicitly. Here are a few different types of themes:

Didactic

Intended to teach, particularly in having moral instruction as an ulterior motive.

Theological

Based upon the nature and will of God as revealed to humans; pertaining to theology.

Psychological

Pertaining to mental phenomena as the subject matter; influencing the mind or emotions.

Social

Relating to human society, the interaction of the individual and the group, or the welfare of human beings as members of society.

Entertaining

Holding attention with something amusing or diverting.

Escapist

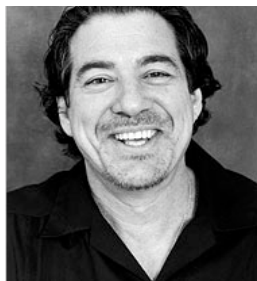
Avoiding reality by absorbing the mind in a world of fantasy or in an imaginative situation.



This story takes place on a Los Angeles Freeway.



Hollywood: The Boulevard of Broken Dreams



The author himself.

Summary:

Dagoberto Gilb's "Love in L.A." is taken from his short story collection, *The Magic of Blood* (1993). "Love in L.A." is a story about a man named Jake who is in search of finding his true identity amidst the chaos and falsity exuded by the Hollywood life. The story begins with Jake stuck in traffic on the Hollywood freeway. He becomes distracted with thoughts about successful lifestyles and freedom, causing him to crash into the car in front of him. The owner of the victim car was a beautiful young woman named Mariana. Jake tries to con, impress, and flatter Mariana with untruthful information and characteristics of himself. Mariana, although timid and hesitant, agrees to call Jake. As Jake drives away, Mariana copies down his license plate. The story ends with Jake driving off, revisiting his thoughts about his personal aspirations and freedom.

About the Author:

Dagoberto Gilb was born in Los Angeles California to an illegal Mexican immigrant mother and a Spanish-speaking Anglo father from the East Los Angeles area. His parents divorced when he was a young boy. He attended many junior colleges before transferring to UC Santa Barbara to study philosophy and religion. Dagoberto Gilb previously worked as a construction worker and carpenter in both El Paso and Los Angeles. He is a visiting writer at the University of Texas, University of Arizona, University of Wyoming, Vassar, and CSU Fresno. He is currently a professor in the Creative Writing Program at Texas State University in San Marcos. Dagoberto Gilb has won many literary prizes such as the James D. Phelan award in literature, the Whiting Award, a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship, the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, and is recognized through the El Paso Writer's Hall of Fame, the Library of Congress Archive of Hispanic Literature on Tape, and the Texas Book Festival's Bookend Award for Ongoing Literary Achievement. His works have been translated in French, Italian, Japanese, German, Spanish, and Dutch. He is most famous for his novel, *The Last Known Residence of Mickey Acuña*. His writing often reflects his own experiences; he writes about where he's been and where he comes from.

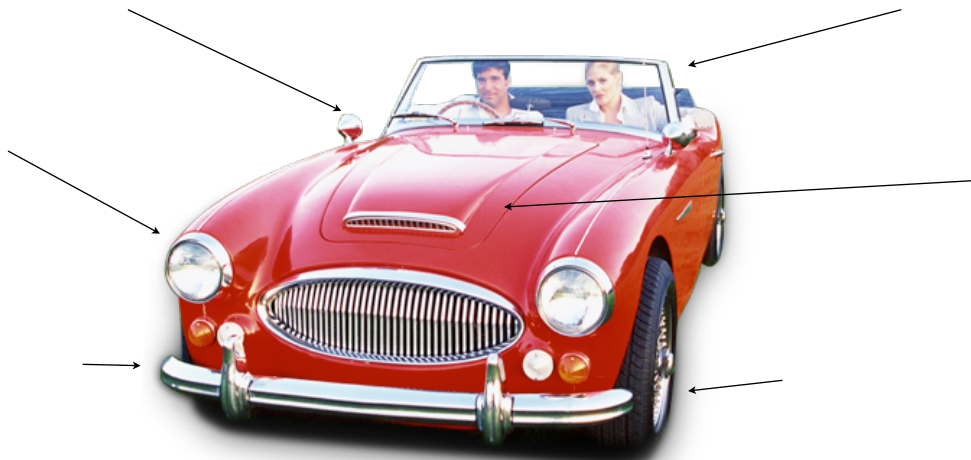
"Believe in looking reality straight
in the eye and denying it."

- Garrison Keillor

Our seminar will focus on the aspect of themes in a story and how they are expressed by the author. The major themes in this short story are ambition and striving to improve oneself, false reality versus reality, and the Hollywood life. We will be discussing how the themes are revealed and developed. To prepare for the seminar, answer the first question in a well thought out response. Next respond to two other questions, utilizing quotes as evidence from the text to support your answers.

QUESTION 1:

Jake's description of his dream car tells us about his personality and his dreams. It becomes a theme in the story. Using colorful language and vivid descriptions describe yourself as if you were a car. Consider the symbolism of what's in the interior, bumper stickers, the color, the words on the license plate, etc. Would you be a convertible? messy minivan? old station wagon? environmental hybrid? luxurious limousine? Relate your description to what it depicts about your character.



2. Jake turned his head and “stared bye bye to the steadily employed” (256). He also looks into his rear view mirror at the end of the story (258). What do these actions suggest about his personality? What is the significance of the idea of looking back in the story?
3. How does the setting of Los Angeles play into the story? Also what is the significance of the story taking place on a freeway?
4. Discuss the idea of Jake’s false persona in the story. What prompts him to play the role of a character instead of being himself. You may relate this to how he claims he is an actor (257).
5. Identify the three aspects of Jake. Include what he wants to be, how he presents himself to others (to Mariana), and who he really is.
6. Reflect on how Jake’s car represents his aspirations. What does his description of the car he would like to have (first paragraph, page 256) demonstrate about his ideal life?
7. How does Jake’s statement that new cars are easy “to put a dent in” (page 257) relate to Mariana’s character and how she responds to Jake?
8. Jake has been dreaming of a steady job. However, when Mariana tells him she has to get to work, Jake states that “that sounds boring” (257). Identify any false impressions Jake gives in the story. Focus on his transition over the course of the story and how he contradicts himself.
9. How would your understanding of the story change if it ended before the last paragraph? What impression does the last paragraph give you about the story?
10. To Jake, “so much seemed so unlikely, but there was always a possibility” (257). Relate this quote from the book to his chances with Mariana as well as Hollywood aspirations in general.

“His sense of freedom swelled as he drove into the now moving street traffic, though he couldn’t stop the thought about that FM stereo radio and crushed velvet interior and the new car smell that would even make it better.”

*“I walk this empty street.
On the Boulevard of Broken Dreams
Where the city sleeps
and I’m the only one and I walk alone”
-Green Day*