

EAE 0422 A	Sujet Jury	Sujet Candidat		Code Sujet	CLG 4
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Your main commentary should be focused on *auxiliaries*. Other topics may also be addressed.

For weeks after that I could not believe in my feelings. My personality was numb, reduced to a lumpish, loose, dissolved state. I was a non-man, something that knew vaguely that it was human but felt that it was not. As time separated me from the experience, I could feel no hate for the men who had driven me from the job. They did not seem to be individual men, but part of a huge, implacable, elemental design towards which hate was futile. What I did feel was a longing to attack. But how? And because I knew no way to grapple with this thing, I felt doubly cast out.

I went to bed tired and got up tired, though I was having no physical exercise. During the day I overreacted to each event, my banked emotions spilling around it. I refused to talk to anyone about my affairs, because I knew that I would only hear a justification of the ways of the white folks and I did not want to hear it. I lived carrying a huge wound, tender, festering, and I shrank when I came near anything that I thought would touch it. But I had to work because I had to eat. My next job was that of a helper in a drugstore, and the night before I reported for work I fought with myself, telling myself that I had to master this thing, that my life depended upon it. Other black people worked, got along somehow, then I must, *must*, MUST get along until I could get my hands on enough money to leave. I would make myself fit in. Others had done it. I would do it. I had to do it.

I went to the job apprehensive, resolving to watch my every move. I swept the sidewalk, pausing when a white person was twenty feet away. I mopped the store, cautiously waiting for the white people to move out of my way in their own good time. I cleaned acres of glass shelving, changing my tempo now to work faster, holding every nuance of reality within the focus of my consciousness. Noon came and the store was crowded; people jammed to the counters for food. A white man behind the counter ran up to me and shouted:

"A jug of Coca-Cola, quick, boy!"

My body jerked taut and I stared at him. He stared at me.

35 "What's wrong with you?"
 "Nothing," I said.
 "Well, move! Don't stand there gaping!"
 Even if I had tried, I could not have told him what was wrong. My sustained expectation of violence had exhausted me. My preoccupation with curbing my impulses, my speech, my movements, my manner, my expressions had increased my anxiety. I became forgetful, concentrating too much upon trivial tasks. The men began to yell at me and that made it worse. One day I dropped a jug of orange syrup in the middle of the floor. The boss was furious. He caught my arm and jerked me into the back of the drugstore. His face was livid. I expected him to hit me. I was braced to defend myself.

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 45 "I'm going to deduct that from your pay, you black bastard!" he yelled.

50 Words had come instead of blows and I relaxed.
 "Yes, sir," I said placatingly. "It was my fault."
 My tone whipped him to a frenzy.
 "You goddamn right it was!" he yelled louder.
 "I'm new at this," I mumbled, realising that I had said the wrong thing, though I had been striving to say the right.

55 "We're only trying you out," he warned me.
 "Yes, sir. I understand," I said.
 He stared at me, speechless with rage. Why could I not learn to keep my mouth shut at the right time? I had said just one short sentence too many. My words were innocent enough, but they indicated, it seemed, a consciousness on my part that infuriated white people.

60 Saturday night came and the boss gave me my money and snapped: "Don't come back. You won't do."