

¶ 2

In contrast, the story uses Sonny's love for music to suggest an alternative path in life, one focused on improvising and adapting to what life throws his way, a path that leads to a feeling of greater self-worth. Perhaps it's best to turn to the story's final paragraphs to show this increase in self-esteem; it comes to us, like the rest of the story, through the eyes of the narrator. Sitting and listening to his brother play the piano, the narrator relates that Sonny "began with the spare, flat statement of the opening phrase of the song," playing the notes laid out for him; then, the narrator continues, "[Sonny] began to make it his" (148). Using music as a metaphor, the narrator shows how Sonny not only breaks free from the *flat* and dull notes on the sheet music to compose his own vibrant tune but also breaks free from the *flat*, strict, and singular guidelines his brother and society laid out for him as an appropriate path to living a good life. Sonny's freedom permits making both his music and his life, truly, very much *his*. For, indeed, it was this freedom that Sonny longed for throughout his life, and finally, his brother sees it: "Freedom," the narrator observes, "lurked around us and I understood, at last, that he could help *us* to be free if *we* would listen, that he would never be free until *we* did" [italics mine] (148). It seems all Sonny ever had to do was to show his brother his music to earn his freedom and respect; in fact, the narrator even points out the irony that by keeping Sonny from living the musical life Sonny longed for, the narrator also kept *himself* from being free. We might even imagine that when Sonny "nod[s]" at his brother before beginning to play again in the story's final paragraph, Sonny sets the narrator free to live his own life, unencumbered by any paternal feelings toward Sonny (148). Through these moments in the final scene, we see Sonny not only forging his own path ahead but also feeling as though his life is full of dignity, a feeling that frees him more than anything else ever could.

370 words