



ENGLISH 204  
FINAL EXAM  
FALL 2004-2005

**Directions:** Texts A & B both discuss issues of race and injustice. Critique Text A, synthesizing information from B to support your thesis. (Time Allowed: 2 1/2 hours)

TEXT A

**A perspective on injustice**

By Walter Mosley (July 27, 2003)

*The hatred that some of the world feels for America is perhaps easier for its black citizens to understand than its white, argues Walter Mosely.*

When my father sat there in our darkened living room wishing that he could go out and join the melee, I saw something that it took me many years to work out. He was far beyond simple outrage.

He wanted revenge for all of those years that he was mistreated and for all the millions who had been murdered and robbed, raped, and silenced. He wanted to go out in the streets and yell and fire his gun into the void of his oppression.

Did he hate? Most definitely. Should the people he hated have been afraid of him? Without a doubt. LeRoy Mosley was the victim of a system of racism that had ruined his people for six, eight, ten, and more generations. He was the inheritor of that bitter pill. He was the survivor who now found himself with the possibility of finally getting revenge.

'Burn, Baby, Burn,' was the catchphrase of the riotous sixties. Those words were screaming in my father's mind. He, and millions of other Black men and women, hated White America for the five days of the Watts Riots; for those five days and for generations before and after them.

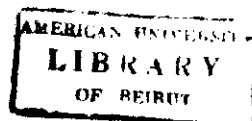
His smouldering wrath was justified in his experience. He never once questioned his own culpability for the racist institutions and their adherents. America was afraid of my father. More than ever, they wanted the part of his mind that held this deep grudge to disappear.

And if my father, and the millions that felt like him, could not drop this hatred, they wanted them to disappear.

This is only natural. No one wants someone who hates them to be anywhere in the periphery. Their mere presence poses a threat. All the years before the riots white people could ignore the history and the crimes. That was a long time ago, we were taught in school. But then Lincoln freed the slaves.

But now the grandchildren and the great grandchildren of those slaves were cutting up, acting out hatred that went well all the way back through centuries of abuse.

Once again my father's seminal story rears its head. This time it's White America saying, They couldn't be at war with me. I never did anything to those people. But white America had to wake up, if just a little, and realise that dark America was writhing in an endless nightmare.



Seeing my father so wretched over his decision to stay at home during the riots made me very insecure. After all, my mother was a white woman. The Luckfields next door and many of the people my father worked with were white.

My father wasn't duplicitous either consciously or unconsciously. His friends were his friends before and after the riots. He would have died to protect my mother from harm, and he would have never hurt her.

He didn't bad-talk whites because of their race. He never excused himself because a white superior criticised him. If the criticism was wrong, then he'd say so. If the criticism came from racism, he boiled. But he was always rational and responsible.

My father would never become his enemy to make a point. So, why did he want to go out with his gun and a Molotov cocktail during the summer of '65? Why did his heart race with a dark pride when he saw his fellow Black Americans wreaking havoc?

Of course, I've already answered this question. The hatred lived inside my father; it lives in the hearts of so many Black people in the United States today. It is part of the legacy of slavery, racism, and Jim Crow. It is something that my father and most Black Americans have learned to live with.

He never fired his gun or burned a building. He never allowed himself to commit the crimes that were committed against him. Most of us haven't. We understand that the choice is between building and tearing down. There is a long discussion issuing from that painful realisation, but that is not the topic of this book.

The only purpose that my father's muted rage has here is to help us try and understand the rage that men and women around the world feel toward America today - especially the Muslim population of the Middle East.

The similarities are undeniable: a group of people who feel intense political and economic pressures from an external culture; people who are pushed to adhere to standards which make them outcasts in their own culture, their own skins.

We see them on CNN or on the cover of our magazines and newspapers: enraged dark-skinned people burning effigies and flags, marching and loudly denouncing the capitalist imperialists - us.

From Pakistan to Saudi Arabia, they rage. For decades, they say, America has interfered with their religion, their money, and their rulers. Sometimes, we run away. Often, we get involved with covert military actions. But lately, we've been preparing for all out war.

This sort of international politics presents a deep quandary for Black Americans. I realised that when I saw Colin Powell being burned in effigy on the streets of Pakistan. They didn't think of him as a Black man, a Negro. They certainly didn't see him as a son of Africa.

He was an American pressing American policies on a people who are sick of our policies and our representatives. They don't identify with him, but I see some of my father in their rage. I imagine ten thousand Pakistanis for every one that stands in protest. I imagine these men and women sitting in their houses feeling impotent and seeing America as their enemy. I see them wanting a world that is forever denied them.

They are living in poverty in a nation surrounded by enemies. They are a people who want to realise their dreams in a world that vies to control their every thought. They hate me. I wish that this hatred would disappear, in just

the same way that White America felt about my father's hatred.

I find myself oddly in the position that whites found themselves in regard to my father's generation. Here I am feeling no enmity toward a people who hate me. They celebrate when I am attacked and damaged. They pray for my downfall.

White America recoiled at the images of Black American hatred. They ran to the suburbs. They elected Richard Nixon. They complained of their innocence. And in ignorance of their own history, they believed in that innocence.

White America has had centuries to hone the myth of American incorruptibility. It's hard to fault the full-faced happy Americans who believe in the Constitution and the right of every American to vote; who believe in democracy and freedom of religion and a free marketplace.

Travelling in the limited circles of middle class America, anyone would be hard pressed to deny the utopian majesty of our nation. We have clean water and automobiles, televisions in every home, and policemen who patrol the streets. We have firemen and elected representatives and free schools and vast quantities of food, clothing, medical aids, alcohol, and tobacco.

The America that exists for the middle class is beautiful. But, there are places that my father and I have both seen that deny this American Eden: poor America, working class America, and the gray area between those two suffering masses.

The millions of men and women who travel the revolving door between the ghetto and prison, the children who got to bed hungry, the elderly who are shunted into systems of maintenance but not care, the mentally ill, the sick, and the undereducated make up a large portion of this paradise.

And these suffering masses are the lucky ones. At least they have the chance of being associated with the American dream. There's the magic of wealth in America, but what about the rest of the world?

Afghanistan was the poorest nation in the world before the WTC attack. And while AIDS decimates Africa, we only have to look at our recent history to see the carnage that we've created on a world wide scale: the bombing of Cambodia and the senseless, endless war on the Vietnamese people, the slaughtering of thousands in Guatemala and the invasion of Panama.

We have embargos against the leaders of nations who never suffer want, leaving only the innocent populations to endure our punishments. Our freedom and comfort comes at a great cost for our own citizens and peoples around the world.

Middle class white America and its aspirants have been blissfully ignorant of this situation. But Black Americans are not so lucky.

*Walter Mosley is a novelist. This text comes from his new book What Next? (Serpent's Tail, forthcoming). His latest Easy Rawlins mystery is Six Easy Pieces (Serpent's Tail, June 2003, <http://www.serpentstail.com>).*

## TEXT B

### **Arab winds blowing against America (USATODAY.com)**

By Youssef M. Ibrahim (November 10, 2004)

Two cartoons this past week summed up Arab feelings about the re-election of President Bush ([news - web sites](#)). A cartoonist in the Saudi daily *Asharq Al Awsat* drew a split frame, one portraying Uncle Sam carrying a sign: "With US or against US," Bush's motto of the past three years. Its companion frame about the next four years has Uncle Sam diluting the choice to simply: "With us ... Or with us."

*Gulf News*, the United Arab Emirates daily, was far blunter in its cartoon Sunday. It had a map of the United States in human form draped with a Nazi uniform marching in goose step with Nazi boots and an arm stretched with a stiff Nazi salute. Across the map were the words "Bush II."

Tough, yet widely shared, views. From Algeria to Saudi Arabia and in vast Muslim countries such as Pakistan, scores of opinion pieces, as well as ample TV commentary, illustrated a deep sense of disappointment and apprehension about Bush's re-election. A senior Arab Cabinet official in a Persian Gulf country very friendly to the U.S. remarked that the latter cartoon "went too far." When prodded further, he went on to say that his "inner self" shares widespread visceral hatred of Bush and his policies, but his "official self" has little choice.

The divide between citizens and many Arab and Muslim leaders is shrinking. At some point, governments will have to choose between joining the anti-American voices in the street or perishing under their sway. As the antipathy builds, U.S. interests in the region will suffer.

### **America: The easy target**

A longstanding anomaly of an otherwise heavily censored Arab media has been an extraordinary freedom accorded to cartoonists, who are taking off the gloves with open-ended criticism of America.

In the freewheeling world of Arab satellite TV, Bush's America has emerged as the *bête noire* of choice, a sort of dartboard at which everyone is welcomed to aim arrows. The most popular satellite channels boasting 40 million viewers per night are Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya, both notable for their consistently anti-American and anti-Israeli fare.

The reverse is true, too. As an expatriate resident of the region, I see that the least-viewed and most mocked "Arab" satellite is Al-Hurra, or the Free One. It is U.S.-sponsored, aiming for Arab hearts and minds. As Al-Hurra goes, so does goodwill for the United States:

- American diplomats work in armed fortresses.
- American cultural centers and schools have all but shut down in Muslim and Arab capital cities.
- American businesses and businessmen are under siege.

Reflecting the divide between Arabs and America, only two governments of the so-called Greater Middle East - Kuwait and

Israel - openly welcomed a second Bush term. Both countries are unique cases tied to the U.S. by special relationships and survival needs.

What is inescapable is that even dictatorial Arab and Muslim leaders have no choice but to take account of public opinion in poll after poll during the past few months, which have shown loathing of the United States. This is the case among close U.S. allies including Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, to name a few.

From pundits to taxi drivers, the expectation is that another four years of the same policies will indeed anchor this hostility. The list of disagreements is long. It includes a rejection of U.S. policy toward Palestinians, America's unilateralist tendencies, its exclusive embrace of unrepresentative governments and its occupation of Iraq ([news](#) - [web sites](#)).

There is a deep aversion to Bush's avowed policy of pre-emptive military action and his arbitrary description of countries as members of some axis of evil. People are perplexed by the substitution of sanctions for the travails of foreign policy. They wonder why Iran is bad, but Libya good? Why is a military dictator in Pakistan OK, but not a Syrian one?

The answers from the Bush administration are disappointing, as they do not square with any principles.

### **Inconsistent policies**

Most important, there is a view in the Arab world - fair or not - that those who run the Bush government view "instability" as a policy. To be sure, one side of the Arab street likes this inasmuch as it puts pressure on their own dictatorial rulers, but this pressure never leads to substantive change.

Bush's appeal for democracy is diluted by being contingent on serving American interests rather than those of the ordinary Arabs or Muslims. Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's Iraqi government, that of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf and that of Afghanistan ([news](#) - [web sites](#))'s President Hamid Karzai are all seen as American puppets. Not exactly the choice of the people.

Is this hurting American interests? Indeed, the money and business alliances in this part of the world say so. This week, China's oil giant Sinopec Group announced with considerable fanfare a historic \$70 billion oil and natural gas agreement with Iran, China's biggest energy deal in the oil-rich Persian Gulf region.

Meanwhile, American oil companies are banned by sanctions from doing business with Tehran. This past summer, Chinese, Russian, Spanish, French and Italian oil companies signed natural gas agreements with Saudi Arabia. No trace of American companies there.

The winds are shifting against U.S. interests, and Bush has four more years to correct what has been a perilous path of U.S. diplomacy. Perhaps the additional term will provide the time to heal some wounds. After all, a quick fix is not in the cards.

*Youssef M. Ibrahim, a former senior Middle East correspondent for The New York Times and energy editor of The Wall Street Journal, is managing director of a political risk-assessment group.*