

**PREVAILING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY WITHIN AFRICAN-AMERICAN
LITERATURE OF AMANDA GORMAN'S *THE HILL WE CLIMB*: STUART HALL'S
AUDIENCE RECEPTION ANALYSIS**

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ABSTRACT

The appealing part of a literary work is to enable the audience to feel emotionally connected with a literary work, leading them to produce diverse interpretations. In this respect, the occurrence of Amanda Gorman's poem of *The Hill We Climb* is capable of attracting American citizens' attention to deliver their perception of the work. The intensity of American society's reactions can be seen in how the audience expresses their responses on *YouTube*. Therefore, the writer decided to analyze the phenomenon further by applying Stuart Hall's reception theory aimed to prevail on how American society perceives the poem. Finally, the result of the analysis shows that the majority of Americans perceived the work as encouragement in refining the principles of American democracy, which were categorized as dominant readings. On the other hand, several audiences who interpreted the poem as a form of hope are included as negotiated readings that deliver different opinions but align with the poet's perception. The last is oppositional readings that interpret the poem as a redundant work, shown by the audience's incapability to comprehend the poem comprehensively. Briefly, the variety of the audience's interpretations is because of diverse perceptions possessed by the audience in perceiving the message of democracy within the poem, which is influenced by their backgrounds.

Keywords: *African-American; American Democracy; Audience; Reception theory; The Hill We Climb*

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INTRODUCTION

The amazing part of a literary work lies in the arrangement of the words capable of engaging people's hearts in which they can feel emotionally connected with the piece of art. According to Pound (1951), "great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree." No wonder the existence of literary work is utterly crucial in delivering a particular message in the most creative and engaging way, which aims to employ profound values that can give a sense of relatedness to the reader. Surprisingly, any literary work, like novels, short stories, and poetry, can mesmerize the readers with the beauty of words that merely convey meaningful points and portray the readers' condition in certain situations. Thus, the emergence of readers starting to show their interest in a literary work by producing their interpretation or reaction over the work is interestingly becoming a new way of connecting the work with the society's reality.

The creation of poetry is one of the most favored by society, which is believed that through reading poetry, they are capable of feeling the author's emotion and the message conveyed within the poem indirectly. According to Barkley (2016),

reading poetry allows one to see into the soul of another person, see what is weighing on their minds and on their hearts, and can open doors to feelings that are sometimes suppressed until that door is opened.

Undoubtedly, through reading a poem, the readers can feel emotionally connected with the most profound feeling of the author but also perceive the grand idea that tries to be conveyed within the lyrics. A poem is mainly composed by the poet to express their perspectives towards certain matters that

probably have interrelatedness with personal experience or even society's condition. The arrangement of the lyrics can be a form of elaboration of a poet's aspiration in responding to a particular issue. In addition, the poem can also transform into a representation of people's current situation and their voices in struggling through every obstacle, including pursuing better changes for their nation.

For instance, a 22 years old African American poet, Amanda Gorman, composed and read a poem entitled "The Hill We Climb" in President Joe Biden's and Vice President Kamala Harris' inauguration on January 20, 2021. Her presence truly stole many people's hearts, especially the Americans. Furthermore, American society, who can sense the interrelatedness between the poem and their condition, perceive Amanda Gorman's poem as the trigger for beginning a new chapter of America as a better and solid nation. Based on The Guardian article on Friday, January 22, 2021, "How Amanda Gorman Became the Voice of New American Era" by Liesl Schillinger clearly describes how her poem as an embodiment of the American voice for the readers, particularly American society who desire to revitalize the essence of American democracy. Perceiving the current condition of American society, which had to encounter the crisis of American democracy where people seem to quickly ignore and violate others' democratic rights like equality, justice, tolerance, and freedom, indeed leads people to a severe division that demolishes unity. Racial discrimination towards African Americans and the incident of Capitol insurrection that contempt the purity of American democracy truly put American society in an unpeaceful situation.

Therefore, Gorman's poetry performance is evaluated as a literary masterpiece that perpetuates a positive outlook on American society in the inauguration. It encourages people's spirit to uplift the principles of a true American democracy. It becomes a powerful influence needed to uphold their hope and strive for a brighter future. The poem has essentially more than just literature. It manifests into a flame of spirit which provokes encouragement to revitalize the principles of American democracy, particularly equality, justice, tolerance, unity, and freedom. Indeed, the poem truly spread an influential impact on American society to be more aware of its importance in nurturing the values of a true American democracy. The poem's influence also invites American society to produce interpretations based on their perception of the lyrics by delivering their reaction video on YouTube. The writer perceives the intensity of American society in expressing their interest in the poem as a social phenomenon which is highly necessary to be discussed further because their interpretation also reflects how the poem influences their perception in seeing society's condition.

In this respect, the writer collects several writings which are considered relevant to be used as a literary review in order to extend insightful information that can be used to perform the analysis properly. The first writing that the writer perceived to be a suitable reference is Emma Baldwin's poem analysis of Gorman's poem "The Hill We Climb". It was written on a well-known website, *Poem Analysis*, on January 23, 2021, which contains a diverse analysis of poetry from many poets, including Gorman. The writer considered Baldwin's writing on this website eligible to be selected as one of the literary reviews because she graduated from East Carolina University

with a BA in English, minoring in Creative Writing, BFA in Fine Art, and BA in Art Histories. In addition, the writer selected Baldwin's poetry analysis from the *Poem Analysis* website because it is the largest database of poetry analysis. Over 3.600 poems have been analyzed and published on this website, which can be considered a trustworthy reference. In this case, Emma Baldwin focuses on analyzing Gorman's poem "The Hill We Climb" to reveal the intrinsic elements of poetry, such as the language used within the lyrics and the figurative language selected by the poet.

Moreover, she also unveils the poem's theme, the structure, and the symbols used within the poem. Baldwin also summarises the poem to ease the reader in understanding the message conveyed within the lyrics. By perceiving Baldwin's analysis, the writer could receive additional insight into comprehending the poem.

The second paper chosen by the writer to be selected as part of literary reviews is a poem analysis done by Angela Tran on a website called Gradesaver. Briefly, the writer assumes the analysis from Gradesaver's website is valid and eligible to be used as one of the literary reviews because the website was written and edited by Harvard students, which is considered a credible source that can be used as a reference. Like Baldwin's analysis is concerned with analyzing the poem's intrinsic element, particularly the theme, Angela Tran's analysis also performs a similar analysis. Furthermore, through Tran's analysis, the writer can understand that the poem portrays a sense of hope, expectation, and redemption delivered through several words presented by Amanda Gorman within her poem. Indeed, Tran's writing helps the writer evaluate how

the poet conveys the poem's main message through the arrangement of the lyrics, which could present the implicit "Hope" of refining American democracy.

The next paper used by the writer as part of literary reviews is a journal article from Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Yogyakarta discusses audience reception "Reception Analysis of Millennials Generation to Ads in Social Media" written by Setiya Hertanti Oktayusita, Basuki Agus Suparno, and Christina Rochayanti. The journal is aimed to figure out the millennials' perspective after watching the advertisement published by one of the political parties in Indonesia, namely Gerindra, which the ads itself presented with the title "Indonesia Bergerak Bersama Gerindra dan Rakyat version Sarjana Kerja Kerja Kerja!". In this case, to know how the Indonesian millennials perceive the ads based on their understanding, the writers applied the Reception theory by Stuart Hall to classify the audience of Indonesian millennials into three categories of audiences who are responding to the ads diversely. The category of the dominant audience is where the millennial perceive the ads as a form of positive political ads because it is capable of criticizing the government-related toward the issue encountered by society. The next category is the negotiated audience, the millennial audience who evaluates the ads as merely a form of criticism without offering any solution. On the other hand, the category of oppositional audience reveals several millennials disagree with the ads because they contain irrelevancy and seem to be unbeneficial for the audience. Through this research, the writer acknowledges the distinction of interpretations regarding the millennial in perceiving the ads is because they distinguish characters, education and social background, experiences, or interest toward

political parties. Clearly, this journal adds insightful information regarding the proper application of Stuart Hall's Reception theory.

The last is a journal analysis from Bina Nusantara University, entitled "Analysis of Audience Reception on Youtube Towards Anti Cyberbullying Video Campaign in The Cyber Bully by CameoProject" written by Astrid Haryanti and Siti Dewi Sri Ratna Sari. By comprehending the audience reception over the video, the journal reveals a broader perspective about how the victim of Cyberbullying should be more open in socializing and making a positive contribution to society to boost their confidence, particularly in dealing with this kind of issue. The journal implements reception analysis and critical discourse analysis as the foundation to process the result of in-depth interviews, which are elaborated into a comprehensive narrative. The result of the analysis itself shows that most of the audience perceives the campaign carrying out positive influence in changing people's mindset about how important it is to understand Cyber Bullying, embrace the victim, and start a humble discussion about this issue seriously to prevent similar cases from happening. Undoubtedly, the journal contributes to giving a deeper understanding of how to apply the theory in different contexts properly.

Clearly, both journals are giving major contributions to the writer to be more critical in implementing Hall's Reception theory. In accordance with Baldwin's and Tran's analysis, both of these writings focused on revealing the intrinsic elements by analyzing the lyrics to comprehend the poem's theme, which turns out to be evoking the value of hope. However, through the literary reviews, there is no writing which is concerned with

deciphering Americans’ reception of the poem that shows intense excitement in comprehending the poem that believes to be containing the values of American democracy. Thus, this paper’s main objective is to prove that the majority of American society perceives and comprehends Gorman’s poem conveyed the notions of American democracy. Moreover, the writer is also intended to reveal that the poem had successfully influenced American society to notice and realize their duty to nurture the principles of American democracy.

In order to be able to achieve the main objective, the writer applied Stuart Hall’s Reception theory to prevail the society’s perception of “The Hill We Climb” by evaluating the selected reaction videos on YouTube into three parts which are “dominant”, “negotiation” and “oppositional” readings. Reception theory emphasizes the interpretation of the reader’s reception toward a particular literary text that led them to produce or construct its meaning. By implementing reception theory, the writer can acknowledge the factors capable of influencing American society’s perception of the poem into diverse interpretations particularly affected by their social backgrounds like social, cultural background, and personal experience. Furthermore, to do the analysis properly, the writer applies library research in collecting the acquired data. According to George (2008, p. 6), “library research involves identifying and locating sources that provide factual information, personal or expert opinion on a research question; a necessary component of every other research method at some point.” Finally, the writer elaborates the analysis into three parts which are the dominant readings, the negotiated readings and the oppositional readings. Classifying audience perception into three categories of readings based on Stuart

Hall’s Reception theory will ease the writer to explain why the majority interprets the poem as representing a true American democracy.

DISCUSSION

Based on William A. McClenaghan’s *Basic Concepts of Democracy* explained five basic principles of American democracy, such as recognition of the fundamental dignity of every person, respect for the equality of all people, faith in majority rule and concern for minority rights, compromise, and respect the value of freedom for all people. The primary principle that becomes the first important act that needs to be practiced by society is recognizing and respecting fundamental dignity. Indeed, to exercise the value of respect is to fully understand the practice of tolerance and compromise others’ circumstances. Surely, when American society truly internalizes the value of respect by performing tolerance, they will naturally be able to understand that it is very crucial to treat others fairly and equally. Moreover, it never interferes with people’s freedom as a form of understanding the principle of a true American democracy. Shortly, the primary principles of American democracy are concerning equality, justice, tolerance, unity and freedom. In this case, the writer analyzed the video reactions by American audience from various backgrounds to classify which audience that comprehend the poem contained the principles of American democracy, the audience who has distinct interpretation but still relevant with the main point of the poem and the audience who unable to grasp the primary message of the work.

American Society’s Capability in Comprehending *The Hill We Climb* as the Voice of American Democracy: Dominant Readings

The purpose of analysis reception is to find how people in the context of social and historical can understand all kinds of text media, is about interpretation, conformity, and allegiance (Downing, 1990, p. 161). In this respect, the selected videos are analyzed attentively to uncover the factors that affect people’s opinion about the poem in such diverse ways. Furthermore, the writer provides an explanation of why many American societies show similar comprehension and interpretation about Amanda Gorman’s poem. It implies that they have relevant perception which enables them to comprehend the main intention of the poet in creating *The Hill We Climb* with particular lyrical arrangement.

Stuart Hall explained that when the majority of readers possess relevant perception with the producer of the “text” in perceiving the main message of the “text” is called dominant readings. Basically, the dominant reading is when the audience or readers perceive and understand the main point of a work delivered by the producer of the “text”. Mostly, this kind of situation explains that the reader and the producer have similar perceptions which are influenced by similar ideologies, beliefs, cultural and racial backgrounds owned by the readers and the producer. Thus, in the following section, the writer provides the information of the data from the selected videos to be analyzed and to reveal what kind of factors that interconnect them which makes the reader and the poet of *The Hill We Climb* possess relevant perception in comprehending the grand message of the poem itself.

Table 1. Audience’s Reaction Videos as Dominant Readings

No	Title	Channel	Number of Views	Number of Comment
1	Poet Reacts to Amanda Gorman’s Inauguration poem-“The Hill We Climb”	Youngblood Poetry	63.965 views	305 comments
2	Celebrating Amanda Gorman’s “The Hill We Climb”: Reactions from Oregon State’s Faculty and Students	Oregon State University - School of Writing, Literature	28.000 views	109 comments
3	Rappers react to Amanda Gorman’s PROFOUND Inaugural Poem- The Hill We Climb	Learn With Us	56.684 views	377 comments
4	Dr. Jason Johnson on Biden’s Orders and Amanda Gorman	Dr JasonJohnson	21.550 views	13 comments
5	The Dolan Twins React to Amanda Gorman’s Poem	Deeper Clips	9.800 views	26 comments

Table 2. The Data of Audience’s Background

No	Name	Occupation	Background
1.	Kendryk Youngblood	Poet	❖ African-American man (Perceived from the physical characteristics)

			❖ Teach Poetry in University of Houston
2.	Samarra Watson Chris Smith	Bachelor of Arts student (English major) MFA student in Poetry	❖ African-American girl (Perceived from the physical characteristics) ❖ White American boy (Perceived from the physical characteristics)
3.	Mitch	Rapper	❖ White American man (Perceived from the physical characteristics)
4.	Dr. Jason Johnson	Pop Culture Analyst	❖ African-American man (Perceived from the physical characteristics)
5.	Ethan and Grayson Dolan	American Comedian	❖ White American man (Perceived from the physical characteristics)

The first reacting video is “Poet Reacts to Amanda Gorman’s Inauguration poem-“The Hill We Climb”” which comes from a YouTube channel named Youngblood Poetry. Furthermore, the speaker in the video is Kendryk Youngblood, a professional poet who performs Spoken Word, writes poetry, teaches poetry, and edits/critiques poems from the University of Houston, Texas. In addition, he is an African American man who is very passionate about composing poetry and sharing thoughts about diverse types of poems. The speaker delivered his statement about his perception of this poem which he could see that the poem portrayed or contained several principles of American democracy, particularly unity. In this respect, the aspect of unity is one of the most crucial principles within American democracy. Thus, if the people are unable to show and practice tolerance as well as compromise each others’ differences, it definitely can ruin the nation’s unity. The following part is Youngblood’s statement confirming that he perceived the poem as a form of force that can unite people and enforce the spirit of a true American democracy.

Kendryk Youngblood (3:47) = “There’s a poem about unity like, and I’m really happy for this because the last four years

of this nation has been really really shaky, a lack of unity obviously.”

Based on the statement, the writer perceives that the speaker captures the essence of the poem and highlights the principle of unity. It is supported by a Harvard Correspondent Lian Parsons who explained that Gorman’s poem is called for unity and justice by reckoning with the nation’s past and looking toward its future, which can produce a major influence on society, just like Youngblood’s perception of this work. The speaker delivers his comprehension of the poem that delivers an impactful influence in promoting unity intensively since the current condition of America is quite shaky and unstable where people seem to lose their sense of empathy and togetherness. It is shown by several incidents that depict the shakiness of unity like what happened in Capitol building which Youngblood also mentioned within his statements.

Kendryk Youngblood (7:28) = “I needed this poem, all right y’all like I haven’t even been expressing how hard last year was for me or anything like that not just because of personal issue although there was some of that, but like, just national strive and stuff and even how we started

this year with the Capitol Riot, ah man it was tough”

His relevant perception of the poem has interrelatedness with his racial, cultural, and educational backgrounds, which leads him to comprehend the poem’s message that is in line with the poet. He is an African American poet who is also interested in reviewing, editing, reacting, and composing poetry through his *YouTube* channel. His awareness must be more sensitive than other people who are not dealing with poetry for most of their time. By becoming a poet, Youngblood can comprehend Amanda Gorman’s grand message within her poem, inspired by the series of crisis that happened over America, particularly the Capitol Riot. The following paragraph, the writer provides another proof of how some American society perceives the poem, which contains the principle of American democracy. Their comprehension also has connectedness with their backgrounds which supports them in possessing relevant perception to understand the poem that is in line with the poet.

The second video, “Celebrating Amanda Gorman’s “The Hill We Climb”: Reactions from Oregon State’s Faculty and Students” is about two students and lecturers from Oregon State University reacting to the poem. Within the video, several people express their responses to the implicit message conveyed by Amanda Gorman within the lyrics. The speakers are Jennifer Richter as the Assistant Professor of Poetry at Oregon State University, Liddy Detar as Academic Advisor, Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing, Karen Holmberg as Associate Professor of Poetry in Oregon State University, Samarra Watson from Bachelor of Arts student in English major, and Chris Smith as MFA student in Poetry. Although all of them understand the

major idea and message delivered by Gorman, who aspire to the principle of a true American democracy that seems to be inspired by the series of critical conditions happening within American society in the past few years, two of the speakers are expressing deeper interpretation from the others. In this respect, Samarra Watson from Bachelor of Arts student in English major delivered her comprehension of how the poem portrays one of the principles of American democracy, which is equality and fair treatment towards everyone regardless of their distinguished situations.

Samarra Watson (4:43) = “It allows me to imagine a world where people of color, women of color, trans people... A skinny Black girl is standing there at the Inauguration of the President of the United States, speaking. And, our voices have so often been left in the dust and quieted and spoken over...And it just allows me to imagine a world where everyone is heard and everyone has the opportunity to be listened to.”

Watson feels the poem enforces a spirit of democracy. She hopes that America finally can treat people equally without making their differences become a limit for them to gain equal and fair opportunities like freedom of speech. Thus, Watson’s reaction also portrays her perception in line with Gorman’s, that the poem encourages American society to handle the crisis of equality and justice seriously since many cases of how minorities like African Americans are being oppressed, specifically over their rights of democracy. In addition, Watson’s relevant perception of the poem is influenced by her cultural and racial background as African American, which is perceived through her physical appearance and her perception related to how the people of color, transgender and women of color remain unable to freely express their voice.

Furthermore, the man within the second video, namely Chris Smith an MFA student in Poetry, also explained how the poem beautifully conveys a strong message about our duty to protect and strengthen the principle of American democracy, especially in nurturing tolerance and compassion towards others. The following part is Smith's statement about his reaction to the poem, which contained more than just encouragement and a warning to society.

Chris Smith (4:11) = "And Gorman gives us that: a poem that warms and warns at the same time, that allows us to celebrate this moment while looking forward at the labor that is still ahead, at the activism that is asked of us, activism that will look like a thousand different things, that will look like protest in the street and bravely putting your body into public places, but also quite acts of activism, of quietly advancing the notion that our country should be more tolerance, more compassionate, than it is. In your words and actions and perhaps even in your poems."

Based on this statement, the writer can understand that the speaker is capable of interpreting the poem deeply, where Smith can deliver two of the principles of democracy, particularly tolerance and compassion. Through analyzing his interpretation, he emphasizes a certain message conveyed within the poem in which giving American society a sign of warning where the stability, as well as the peacefulness of a nation, is American citizens and governments' obligation to ensure that the people are actively participating in nurturing the democracy. In this respect, Chris Smith shows that he can understand the grand idea of the poem intended by Gorman to encourage American society to contribute to the nation's development, which keeps maintaining the core of American democracy

by performing diverse kinds of actions. Smith's educational background as a student of Poetry at Oregon State University affects his comprehension of the poem, which aligns with the poet's intention of delivering the message within the poem in such a way.

Amazingly, the poem is attracting people's hearts widely. Many White Americans also sense the main message of the poem, which turns out to be influential in leading them to be more aware of the condition of their nation. The third video comes from the YouTube channel *Learn with Us*, which is delivered by rapper Mitch who is a White American. The video itself, entitled "Rappers react to Amanda Gorman's PROFOUND Inaugural Poem- "The Hill We Climb"" contained reactions from White American rappers to the poem. Interestingly, the reaction expresses how important it is to become more contributive to provoking positive influence of unity by internalizing values of respect which can prevent the continuity of division within American society. The following part is the quotation of Mitch's statements about how he interpreted the poem as an encouragement to start the action of peacefulness and unity, which is undoubtedly included in the principles of American democracy.

Mitch (3:54) = "If you're being quite in a time like this, If you're being quite in a time that's so connected like this, you're not helping. You know, just being peaceful by yourself is not helping this greater thing. It's like you need to be actively sowing the seeds for peace and the seeds for unity rather than the seeds of division that can't happen if you're just being quite."

Based on Mitch's statement, the writer perceived that his poem's interpretation is in line with the main message itself. In contrast, Gorman also wants her work to encourage people to cooperate to uplift the principle of democracy, particularly unity. His interpretation also implies that he has a relevant perception of the poet in comprehending the poem's message. Within Chris' interpretation, he perceives the poem suggests a persuasive engagement to trigger people's awareness about their duty in striving for peacefulness for the nation through performing positive actions like nurturing tolerance, respecting others' dignity, compromising people's conditions, and enabling other's rights fully including freedom of speech. In this case, the most influential factor that seems to be affecting Mitch's relevant perception of the poem is his routine in responding to sensational literary works, which becomes one of their activities besides rapping. Thus, no wonder his reaction is in line with the poet's purpose in composing the poem in the first place, which is seen through his interpretation. The following paragraph is other evidence that shows how American society is capable of comprehending the grand message of the poem.

The fourth video is entitled "Dr. Jason Johnson on Biden's Orders and Amanda Gorman" which Pop culture analyst Dr. Jason Johnson delivered. Within his reaction, there is a particular major point that needs to be highlighted about how the nation of America still has a long journey to go in achieving the primary objective of providing equality for every citizen in America, including the minorities. In order to reach the main purpose of American society in restoring people's full right to equality and justice is through solidifying American democracy permanently,

which acquires a serious commitment from the government as well to achieve it. The speaker comprehends the poem as a medium of warning to the American government that they need to take full responsibility for refining the nation's administration. By having people understand the importance of equality, the society will always uphold the principles of justice, tolerance, compromise, and freedom which are essentially the core aspect of equality. The following quotation shows Johnson's statement in delivering his thought about the poem, implying a task for all Americans, especially the government, to intensify their attempt to reinforce equality.

Dr. Jason Johnson (2:20) = "I love that she said that democracy is unfinished right, it's the idea that you can try to have a restorative administration but the promise of this country to provide equal opportunity for all the citizens here has not just been accomplished."

The above statement shows how Johnson truly comprehends the main intention of the poet, who wants to not only deliver people's expectation of changes and encourage Americans to be more contributive in nurturing American democracy but also to imply a warning of how the struggle in pursuing prosperity is still far from finished. Although it is still far away from being finished, the possibility of changing the nation into a better and peaceful condition remains highly possible to accomplish. Moreover, if the society and the government can cooperate to strengthen the nation's foundation, which is American democracy, by properly practicing all of the principles. In this respect, Johnson's reaction of perceiving the poem as a sign of warning that people still need to strive for betterment is genuinely influenced by his cultural and occupation background as an African American pop culture analyst. His capability in

sensing the poem deeply since he can relate the message delivered by Amanda Gorman through the poem to the current condition of the society must have influenced his relevant perception of the poet that is affected by his background.

Not just the minorities feel the spirit of the poem, but the fifth video also becomes another proof that shows how the poem can attract people's attention to react and deliver their thoughts about it, including White Americans. The reaction video entitled "The Dolan Twins React to Amanda Gorman's Poem" was delivered by White American men Ethan and Grayson Dolan, who perceive the poem as portraying how critical America's condition is but actually still has a chance to change the situation. The following part is the quotation of Dolan's statement that the poem is describing the nation's foundation recently and the past few years.

Ethan and Grayson Dolan (2:09)= "She essentially like painted our democracy, she talked about our democracy being, you know, held back and coming back now."

Based on the quotation, the writer can infer that the speaker comprehends the poem, which aligns with the poet's main objective in creating the poem in such an arrangement. Dolan can perceive the correlation of the poem with the current condition of American democracy, which is still in an unstable situation where the next president has a major task to refine it. Furthermore, by perceiving all of the reactions delivered by diverse people from various cultural, racial, educational, and occupational backgrounds, it is wholly explained how they can connect with the poem's main message, particularly the principles of American democracy. Through evaluating the speakers' responses, it can be

seen that they perceive American democracy conveyed within the poem in interpreting the lyrics by relying on their perception, which helps them to acknowledge the principles of democracy like equality, justice, tolerance, unity, and freedom. Therefore, the writer believed that the majority of American society's capability to comprehend the poem, which is in line with the poet's main purpose, is strongly affected by their perception of society's condition. Their relevant perception of the poet in perceiving the society's issue implied within the poem is affected by their similarity of backgrounds that supports them to deliver such interpretation. In this case, the influence of similar racial backgrounds and relevant occupations possessed by the readers and the poet makes them have some emotional connection and relevant perception in deciphering the message of democracy in the poem. Briefly, all of the reaction videos prove that most Americans understand the poem containing the principles of American democracy, particularly equality, justice, tolerance, unity, and freedom.

American Society's Capability in Comprehending *The Hill We Climb* as People's Hope: Negotiated Readings

Although many American societies perceive Gorman's poem as representing American democracy, where each major principle of democracy is delivered within the lyrics, several people evaluate the work quite differently. In this case, the kind of reader who perceives the poem in a distinct interpretation from the majority is a negotiated reading. Even though their interpretation is not the same as the majority, they have a relevant perception of the poem's message. They are also not denying the majority's perception about it and the poet's main message within the poem. Thus, an

audience that can be included in the category of negotiated reading is where the people do not entirely disagree with the majority's interpretation. Still, they do not absolutely receive a similar perception to the majority's comprehension of the poem.

In addition, the positive aspect which can be taken from becoming a negotiated reading is when the audience actively produces diverse interpretations to widen the horizon of the poem. The variety of interpretations can give additional information related to people's perception of the poem in which it is interpreted based on their comprehension. Interestingly, the audience's backgrounds are truly affecting their perception in

comprehending the poem from a diverse perspective. Their backgrounds, like race, gender, and occupation, affect the construction of basic conventions that will be used to comprehend any material, including in deciphering a poem's message. No wonder the audience's diverse interpretation of Gorman's poem exists since the people are not from similar backgrounds, which affects the diversity of perception the readers possess. In this case, several people perceive the poem as a form of hope or implying people's expectations towards the nation. For instance, the following part shows two speakers who deliver their reactions by expressing their understanding of the poem on their YouTube channel.

Table 3. Sample Video of Audience's Reaction Towards *The Hill We Climb* by Amanda Gorman

No	Title	Channel	Number of Views	Number of Comment
1	Amanda Gorman Is Giving Americans Hope	The Late Late Show with James Corden	835.000 views	1.600 comments
2	SPOKEN WORD POET Reacts to Amanda Gorman's Inauguration poem! "The Hill We Climb"	Cynthia Amoah	10.000 views	51 comments

Table 4. Informant Data

No	Name	Occupation	Background
1.	James Corden	Presenter and Actor	❖ White American descendants England
2.	Cynthia Amoah	Spoken word poet	❖ African American girl (Perceived from the physical characteristics) ❖ Originally from West Ghana, West Africa. ❖ Graduated from The New School New York

Based on the table above, the first video is entitled "Amanda Gorman Is Giving Americans Hope" delivered by well-known presenter James Corden. It is an interview video of Amanda Gorman in *James Corden's* talk show program, which had Gorman expressing her motivation in composing the

poem and the whole objective of her creation. Within this video, Gorman also explained how the insurrection at the Capitol was affecting her while writing the poem and even during the finishing process. Based on the article written by Bill Bradley entitled "Amanda Gorman Wanted to 'Repurify' The Capitol with Her

Words” described how Gorman had been working on her poem long before the attack. Still, the news prompted her to lock herself in her apartment until she finished. Clearly, it explained how the attack over the Capitol truly pushed Amanda Gorman even harder to arrange powerful words which can give strength to the society in facing such a terrible incident that caused a division and catastrophe.

Thus, by perceiving the current condition of America, Amanda Gorman believed that the creation of the poem is needed for the country right now and for the world as well. Gaining the opportunity to recite “The Hill We Climb” at the inauguration of President Biden was her chance as the representative of American citizens as well as minorities to make a change over this situation through her words in sharing positive influence and delivering people’s aspiration for the betterment of America. Essentially, Amanda Gorman has another intention besides encouraging people to restore the balance of a true American democracy. She also wants to give a sense of hope to American society. By arranging the lyrics based on how she copes with the past few years’ experience encountered by society, especially the minorities, she believes that she must enforce the spirit of hope to lighten up society’s motivation in strengthening the nation’s foundation.

The moment she composes the poetry under the chaotic situation of Capitol’s insurrection is turned into a breaking point for her to perform her strength in composing magical words through her poem, giving tremendous changes over this situation. No wonder the poem is also perceived as a hope by certain people who actually feel the poem’s connection with their story in dealing with every up and down of the nation. Indeed, every

incident in America that affects the nation’s stability and society’s peacefulness transforms into a deep trauma within citizens’ lives. The emergence of Gorman’s poem becomes a healing medium to the society in gaining a slight of hope to change the situation in the future. In this case, James Corden as an American citizen, also experiences the critical moments in America, which shows how it would endanger the country’s foundation if the people continued to do nothing but silence. He interprets the poem as hope as well since the occurrence of the poem has hit the spot of people’s hearts to maintain their hope in encouraging each other to change the nation into a better situation.

Furthermore, the second video also shows how the speaker perceived the poem presents a sense of hope like James Corden’s interpretation. Cynthia Amoah, the speaker of the second video, is an African American poet who originally comes from West Ghana, West Africa. She graduated from The New School in New York City, which took literature as her major. Her reaction video is entitled “SPOKEN WORD POET Reacts to Amanda Gorman’s Inauguration poem! “The Hill We Climb”” portrays the speaker’s comprehension of the poem by sensing a tone of hope within the lyrics itself. The following part is the quotation of her statement that shows how she grasps the poem’s main message as presenting a voice of hope.

Cynthia Amoah (7.59) = “What it is that I’m paying attention to that she’s doing a lot is she isn’t necessarily trying to avoid America’s dark past, I think she’s talking a lot about the struggles the grief that we’ve gone through but the poem is also a poem of hope, right of resilience, the title of her poem is called *The Hill We Climb* So, she certainly talking about all of the greatness that came out of the darkness.

So, I'm hearing like tones of hope, I'm hearing tones of resilience, I'm hearing tones of like how much we've evolved and grow and just become better as a result of the horrible four years honey that we just came out of."

By evaluating the statements, the writer evaluates Amoah perceives the poem as simply wanting to invite American society to see the past as a valuable lesson in changing the condition into a more peaceful one, in which people should learn from their past mistakes. She has a similar perception to James Corden that Amanda Gorman is stating the force of hope to engage people in striving for betterment for the nation and society. The speaker also implies that the lyrics are a motivation for American society to always uphold their hope in facing every upcoming challenge because the greater future becomes the result for those who keep struggling and hoping for the best. Evaluating these two video reactions as a sample of people's comprehension of the poem, Americans also see the poem as an enforcement of hope to the society, which is implied within the poem's lyrics. So, instead of interpreting the poem as provoking a true American democracy, they comprehend the poem as an expression of hope. However, it is still included in the main purpose of the poem itself. It proves the interpretation shows how people can see the poem from the other perception beside the majority, which can enrich their insight about the poem itself.

American Audience's Incapability of Comprehending "The Hill We Climb" as A Redundant Work: Oppositional Readings

Based on Stuart Hall's Reception theory, when the audiences are not capable of comprehending the main message of the text or disagree with the producer's message, it makes them included as oppositional readings. This category of reading shows that not all people can possess a relevant perception of the producer in comprehending the main intention of the producer within his literary work. Even though they do understand the primary message of the work, they are not always on the same page with the creator, which is quite normal in the literary world because of the distinct perception that is influenced by their backgrounds. In this respect, the emergence of Amanda Gorman's poem is unable to deny the influence of making American society enchanted by her words within *The Hill We Climb*. Still, it does not mean all American citizens feel the same way about the work. Indeed, the differences possessed by society like their cultural, racial, educational backgrounds and experiences make them possess different perceptions in comprehending and interpreting the "text", including Gorman's "The Hill We Climb". The following part provides proof that not all American society possesses a relevant perception of the poet in perceiving the message of the poem. In addition, the following example also proves how not all Americans agree with Amanda Gorman's idea conveyed within her poem, as well as being unable to sense the emotional connectedness with the work itself.

Table 5. Sample Video of Audience’s Reaction Towards
The Hill We Climb by Amanda Gorman

No	Title	Channel	Number of Views	Number of Comment
1.	Amanda Gorman’s “The Hill We Climb” - Biden’s Inaugural Poem v William McGonagall	Gavin Bobby	1.132 views	46 comments

Table 6. Informant Data

No	Name	Occupation	Background
1.	Gavin Bobby	Youtuber	❖ White American (Perceived from the physical appearance)

Gavin Bobby is a White American citizen who shows contradictory perceptions about Gorman’s poem “The Hill We Climb” which has completely different interpretations about the work itself from the majority. By perceiving his reaction video entitled “Amanda Gorman’s “The Hill We Climb” - Biden’s Inaugural Poem v William McGonagall” which responds to the work portrays Bobby’s incapability to sense the relatedness within the poem. The most important thing to completely understand the whole message or idea conceived within a literary work is to analyze it in deeper evaluation by performing investigation of both the creator and the work to see the linkage itself. Performing in-depth evaluation, particularly finding out the primary reason the creator produced the work in such a way will help the reader or the audience cope with the work’s grand message. Moreover, searching for additional information that relates to the process of doing the work will unveil the core inspiration that influences the creator to compose the work under a particular arrangement. Indeed, it will help the readers or audience comprehend the poem, including comprehensively acknowledging the poem’s main message. The following quotation is

Bobby’s statement that shows his incapability to grasp the poem’s main point, which merely focused on criticizing the technique implemented by Gorman within the poem.

Gavin Bobby (28:23) = “This is, there is also hypocrisy here as well as inconsistency actually is bad in a poem, You start to think well, what’s going on here where’s the theme if you earn but it’s also just hypocrisy and that’s annoying because she is not, she is quite happy to sew division as long as she is triumphant.”

The above quotation shows how Bobby is incapable of perceiving Gorman’s true implicit meaning, which is conveyed within the lyrics. He is too distracted by the poem’s technical element, which makes him incapable of critically evaluating and interpreting the poetry. Moreover, perceiving his reaction to the poem shows how he does not relate the essence of the work with the current incident that happened in America. It is presented clearly on how he criticizes the lines, “That even as we tired, we tried, That we’ll forever be tied together, victorious, Not because we will never again know defeat, but because we will never again sow division.” The primary purpose of these lyrics is to remind and

encourage American society to remember how far their journey is in striving for a brighter future for the nation where American democracy is practiced properly by not repeating the same mistake, which triggers more division in society. However, Gavin Bobby perceives these lyrics as a form of absurdity or leads people to confusion because the arrangement of the words is assumed to be redundant. Analyzing the speaker's statements and the video reaction shows that he does not reach the poem with a sense of relatedness.

The critics only emphasize the technical elements within the arrangement of the words, which are believed to be incorrect or do not make any sense to him, like the use of alliteration within the poem evaluated by him as not coherent. Henceforth, his incapability to comprehend the poem deeply and critically makes him unable to produce relevant interpretation with the majority's interpretation which is in line with the poet's main objective in composing the poem. On the other hand, the distinct interpretation of the poet delivered by Bobby makes him categorized as oppositional reading since he cannot successfully comprehend the poem just like the majority did.

CONCLUSION

Diverse cultural, racial, educational backgrounds and occupation are not the sole factor that leads people to produce a variety of interpretations. Their emotional experiences with society influence the process of understanding. In this respect, most of the audience who comprehend the poem containing the principles of American democracy mostly comes from the same cultural, racial, educational backgrounds and emotional experiences, which influences their

relevant perception. The appropriate perception owned by the majority with the poet in perceiving the message of democracy within the poem is included as dominant readings. On the other hand, those who are unable to perceive the grand message of the poem is because they do not possess relevant perception of the poet, which is influenced by similar emotional experiences and other supporting aspects, like similarity of racial and cultural backgrounds, which makes them included as oppositional reading. Finally, for the audiences who actually comprehend the main message of the poem but have their own perception about it, which sees the work as a form of hope is included as negotiated reading. Indeed, the audience's backgrounds and emotional experience are quite influential in affecting readers' perception, which directs them to construct their own comprehension and interpretation of the poem based on their perception.

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