

Imperium in Imperio Essay

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In his novel *Imperium in Imperio* African-American writer Sutton E. Griggs follows two young African-American protagonists through their education and lives at the end of the nineteenth century, when race relations in the USA were at their lowest point. His book was put on the market in 1899 in self-publication, which already speaks something about the tense [race](#) relations and that people would have rather wanted to not read about the perils of the African-American citizens. He investigates in his novel the road that African-Americans should take in order to achieve equality after Reconstruction failed and African-Americans were mostly disenfranchised in the South. Griggs states in his novel that the old Negro, who was a slave is obsolete and coins the later much used term of the “new Negro”, a confident intellectual and educated man that was needed in order to achieve equality, and he lets the reader make up his own mind which way would be the preferred path to take.

Griggs starts his novel when he introduces us to a representative of the African-Americans of the old South, “Yer mammy is ‘tarmined ter gib yer all de book larning dar is ter be had...,” declares the supposedly uneducated mother of Belton, who is one of the protagonists (Griggs 7). Yet, the mother is determined to have her son receive the best education possible and she understands the value of receiving an education. She speaks in the vernacular, but Griggs conveys right at the beginning of his novel that the

unschooled African-Americans recognize that their children need to be educated in order to become full members of society, and declares that "such power could emanate from such weakness" (Griggs 7). Mrs. Piedmont is somebody that probably qualifies as an "Old...

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