



# Race, Slavery and Abolitionism in the Romantic Period - William Blake's 'Little Black Boy'

*Uli Dürr*

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Seminar paper from the year 2011 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 1,0, University of Würzburg, language: English, abstract: This term paper deals with the institution of slavery and the process of its abolition and takes a look at the different reactions in Romantic literature. First of all, an overview over the historical background will be given, showing the economic importance of the slave trade at the end of the 18th century, as well as giving an outline of the con-temporary major race theories, that were underlying its justification. The movement for the abolition of slavery will be introduced, as well as some of their representa-tives, like Thomas Clarkson, or William Cowper. Subsequently, the main part of the paper will deal with William Blake and his poem "Little Black Boy". The piece will be taken as an example for 18th century abolitionist literature and will be analysed, with the help of secondary literature by Hazard Adams, D.G. Gillham, David Erdman and Lauren Henry. A special focus will be on the poem's religious theme. The term paper will end with a conclusion, summarizing the interpretations of the before-mentioned literary scientists and evaluating the significance of the paper's findings.

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