

Name: _____

Date: _____

We Wear the Mask

by Paul Laurence Dunbar

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
 This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
 And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
 Nay, let them only see us, while
 We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
 To thee from tortured souls arise.
 We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
 We wear the mask!



A Corn-Song

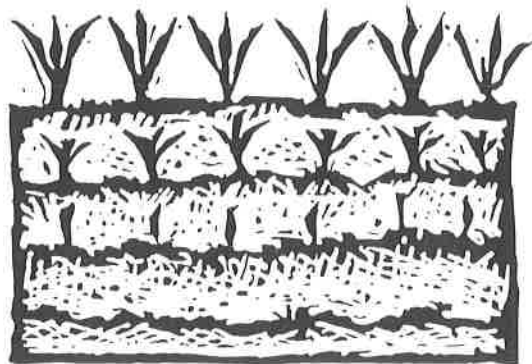
By Paul Laurence Dunbar

On the wide veranda white,
In the purple failing light,
Sits the master while the sun is lowly burning;
And his dreamy thoughts are drowned
In the softly flowing sound
Of the corn-songs of the field-hands slow returning.

Oh, we hoe de co'n
Since de ehly mo'n;
Now de sinkin' sun
Says de day is done.

O'er the fields with heavy tread,
Light of heart and high of head,
Though the halting steps be labored, slow, and weary;
Still the spirits brave and strong
Find a comforter in song,
And their corn-song rises ever loud and cheery.

Oh, we hoe de co'n
Since de ehly mo'n;
Now de sinkin' sun
Says de day is done.



If

By Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or, being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;
If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with wornout tools;
If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breath a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on";
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings—nor lose the common touch;
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run—
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man my son!

Kipling wrote "If" with Dr. Leander Starr Jameson in mind. In 1895, Jameson led about 500 of his countrymen in a failed raid against the Boers, in southern Africa. What became known as the Jameson Raid was later cited as a major factor in bringing about the Boer War of 1899 to 1902. But, the story as recounted in Britain was quite different. The British defeat was interpreted as a victory and Jameson portrayed as a daring hero.

The Lament of the Frog Prince

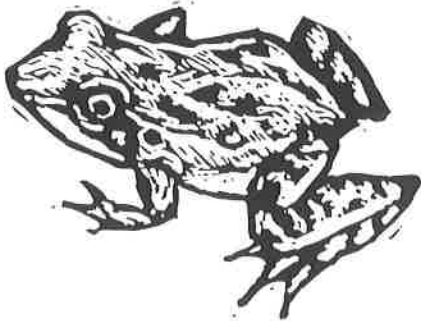
Within this blazing hall
the light of a thousand
candles rivals the harsh,
glittering fire of diamonds.

The screech of violins
sears my brain. Voices trill
with mirthless laughter.

My eager subjects wait.
Their false, cunning smiles
could grace the jaws of jackals.
My lady bows before me,
and by the sound of rustling silk,
her perfume like a memory
of a thousand night flowers.

I am transported
to a time and place of
cool darkness, the whisper
of a breeze caressing rushes
at water's edge, the scent
of creamy clusters of blossoms
swaying gently in the wind,
the soft lap of waves against
the shore. I long to
bury myself in the
comforting ooze of mud.

Ah! If I had only known
I was trading my whole
world for the pleasure
of a single kiss!



By Elisabeth B. Gorey

Honorable Mention: Poetry, Grades 6–8

Reflections 1997–1998, Talent Search for Promising Student Writers