

Honors English 3-4, 2021-22 Summer Assignment

Joseph A. Gregori High School

Congratulations on completing your first year of high school!

To prepare for next year, you will read short stories and poems this summer. This assignment is meant to keep your reading, writing, and analytical skills sharp for the rigor of sophomore year. The analysis that you provide in your summer assignments should be insightful, thorough, and indicative of your work ethic in a class meant for *highly motivated* students.

I created a Schoology Summer course which will be used to offer updates and resources for you; in Schoology, click “Courses” → “My Courses” → “Join a Course” (on the right), and then enter the code: **T64H-TCS8-NNJBX**

You should complete these summer assignments in the order which they are listed on this sheet. Your summer assignments are as follows:

Assignment 1 – Index cards of Literary Devices – due 9 August 2021

Your job is to complete a collection of index cards for the following literary devices. **You are expected to know these terms on the first day of school and throughout the entire year.**

On the front of the index card you will write the term. On the opposite side you will write its definition and an example of it from good literature that you have read yourself.

The following terms are as follows:

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Literary analysis | 10. foil | 19. persona |
| 2. English grammar | 11. hyperbole | 20. personification |
| 3. allusion | 12. implication | 21. satire |
| 4. archetype | 13. inference | 22. stock character |
| 5. connotation | 14. irony (dramatic) | 23. symbol |
| 6. dynamic character | 15. irony (situational) | 24. tone |
| 7. denotation | 16. irony (verbal) | 25. tragic hero |
| 8. dialect | 17. metaphor | |
| 9. figurative language | 18. paradox | |

Assignment 2 – Short story annotations – Due 9 August 2021

Read and annotate “Learning to Read and Write” by Frederick Douglass and “The Man Who Was Almost a Man” by Richard Wright. (PDFs are attached at the end of this document and are available in Schoology.) As you read each piece, make insightful observations and comments on the following topics:

- Independence and dependence
- Equality
- Education and morality
- Societal roles (race, gender)

Additionally, make insightful observations and comments on the following literary strategies:

- Character development
- Symbols and motifs
- Setting
- Dialogue

You are required to have at least 20 solid annotations per short story. Your insights must be interpretative and not surface level. That is, you should **not** simply restate what occurs in the text. Offer your own insight based on the literary strategies and topics provided. (If you'd like, some of your insights could be on topics/literary strategies not listed here.) Your annotations must be handwritten and not typed. No typed entries will be accepted. If you need additional space for your insights, consider making them on sticky notes.

Assignment 3 – Short Answer Questions – Due 11 August 2021

Answer the following questions. These will be submitted online. Each response should be 1-2 paragraphs long, and each paragraph should contain 4-6 sentences. Please be sure to answer the question, provide textual evidence, and explain your reasoning and/or expand on your answer. Your responses should be in MLA format. These are the questions:

On “Learning to Read and Write:”

1. What are your earliest memories of learning to read and write? Contrast the contexts of your learning process to that of Frederick Douglass.
2. To what degree does Douglass argue that education and slavery are incompatible with each other?
3. Discuss how Douglass’ essay works as an argument against slavery.
4. What is the purpose of the bread imagery in Douglass’ essay? Discuss the overall importance to his central message.
5. Write one sentence that encapsulates Frederick Douglass’ main argument. In this response, avoid using the following words/sentence structure verbatim: “Frederick Douglass’ main argument is...”

On “The Man Who Was Almost a Man:”

1. What is the symbolic nature of the catalogue at the beginning of the story?
2. Discuss the relationship that Dave and his mother have. How should one characterize it and why?
3. For what reasons does Dave close his eyes when he fires the gun? Discuss fear in your response.
4. Is rebelliousness (or defiance or disloyalty) against one’s society justified? Explain through the persona of Dave and then explain from your own perspective.
5. Write one sentence that encapsulates Richard Wright’s main message (theme). In this response, avoid using the following words/sentence structure verbatim: “Richard Wright’s main message or theme is...”

Assignment 4 – Poems – Due 11 August 2021

Read the following two (2) poems: “Let America be America Again” by Langston Hughes and “The Hill We Climb” by Amanda Gorman. Complete this assignment for each poem. Both of these will be turned in to Schoology no later than **11 August 2021**.

TPS-FASTT(see attached handout).

TPS-FASTT is a mnemonic device to help you analyze the theme of a specific poem. Each TPS-FASTT you complete should be thorough; think of the format that I provide as more of a guide for your analysis rather than a strict set of instructions to follow.

FINAL NOTE: Please reach out to me if there is an aspect of these assignments or directions that are unclear. My goal is to help you grow as a reader, writer, and overall thinker. I will check my email over summer intermittently and reply as soon as I can. My email address is salazar.j@monet.k12.ca.us

☺ **Have a great summer and happy reading!!! I look forward to meeting you all in August!!!** ☺

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>I. TITLE: Examine the title before reading the poem. Consider connotation (the word or words beyond the surface). Check out the title and just the title. Can you determine what kind of poem? Tone? Theme? Don't worry if you're wrong, but the title often sets us up for these things.</p> | |
| <p>II. PARAPHRASE: Translate the poem into your own words. Do not change the point of view, do not change the tense. Do only a literal translation. Just write what you see on the surface (which is denotation). This might look strange and not make a lot of sense.</p> | |
| <p>III. SPEAKER: Who is the speaker in this poem? Remember to always distinguish speaker from the poet. In some cases, the speaker and poet might be the same, as in an autobiographical poem. But often the speaker and the poet are entirely different. Consider the situation of the poem as well.</p> | |
| <p>IV. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE: Examine the poem for language that is not used literally. This would include, but is not limited to, literary devices (imagery, symbolism, metaphor, allusions, effect of sound devices etc.), and any other devices used in a non-literal manner. Refer to the summer literary terms list for additional figurative language.</p> | |
| <p>V. ATTITUDE (TONE and MOOD): Examine both the speaker's and the poet's attitudes and briefly write briefly how attitudes affect the poem. Give examples. Remember; don't confuse the "speaker" with the author. Look for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The "speaker's" attitude (this is the "voice" of the poem) about the subject. 2. The author's attitude about the subject and characters. 3. The character's attitudes. | |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>VI. SHIFTS: Note shifts in the poem and briefly write about how each effect the poem. Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the occasion of the poem (time and place) • key words (repeated words, key words, and words such as “but” and “yet”) • punctuation (dashes, periods, capitalization, or lack of capitalization, colons...) • stanza length and divisions • changes in line • effect of structure on meaning (structure such as how the poet might place his words) | |
| <p>VII. TITLE: Examine the title again on an interpretive level. This time consider the entire poem. Write a few sentences about it.</p> | |
| <p>VIII. THEME: First list the subjects of the poem. Then determine what the poet is saying about each of those subjects (theme).</p> | |

TPS-FASTT

I. TITLE: Examine the title **before** reading the poem. Consider **connotation** (the word or words **beyond** the surface). Check out the title and just the title. Can you determine what kind of poem? Tone? Theme? Don't worry if you're wrong, but the title often sets us up for these things.

II. PARAPHRASE: Translate the poem into your own words. Do **only** a literal translation. Just write what you see on the surface. (denotation). This might look strange and not make a lot of sense. It's best to do this on a separate piece of paper at first.

III. SPEAKER: Who is the speaker in this poem? Remember to always distinguish speaker from the poet. In some cases, the speaker and poet might be the same, as in an autobiographical poem. But often the speaker and the poet are entirely different. For example, in "Not My Best Side" by Fanthorpe, the speaker changes from a dragon, to a damsel, to a knight-none of these are obviously the author. Consider the situation of the poem as well.

IV. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE: Examine the poem for language that is not used literally. This would include, but is not limited to, literary devices (imagery, symbolism, metaphor, allusions, effect of sound devices etc.), and any other devices used in a non-literal manner. Among other things, look for:

- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1- diction | 5- personification | 9- oxymoron | 13- assonance |
| 2- imagery | 6- symbolism | 10- allusions | 14- consonance |
| 3- simile | 7- irony | 11- onomatopoeia | 15- rhyme scheme |
| 4- metaphor | 8- paradox | 12- alliteration | |

- Give examples. Write briefly about how each effects the poem.
- Not all will be in the poem. Find what you can and work with it.

V. ATTITUDE (TONE and MOOD): Examine both the speaker's and the poet's attitudes and briefly write briefly how attitudes effect the poem. Give examples. Remember; don't confuse the "speaker" with the author. Look for:

1. The "speaker's" attitude (this is the "voice" of the poem) about the subject.
2. The author's attitude about the subject and characters.
3. The character's attitudes.

VI. SHIFTS: Note shifts in the poem and briefly write about how each effect the poem. Look for:

- 1- the occasion of the poem (time and place)
- 2- key words (repeated words, key words, and words such as "but" and "yet")
- 3- punctuation (dashes, periods, capitalization, or lack of capitalization, colons...)
- 4- stanza length and divisions
- 5- changes in line
- 6- effect of structure on meaning (structure such as how the poet might place his words)

| |
|---|
| Always note the line number of something you write about. |
|---|

VII. TITLE: Examine the title again on an interpretive level. This time consider the entire poem. Write a few sentences about it.

VIII. THEME: First list the subjects of the poem. Then determine what the poet is saying about each of those subjects (theme).

Learning to Read and Write by Frederick Douglass

I lived in Master Hugh's family about seven years. During this time, I succeeded in learning to read and write. In accomplishing this, I was compelled to resort to various stratagems. I had no regular teacher. My mistress, who had kindly commenced to instruct me, had, in compliance with the advice and direction of her husband, not only ceased to instruct, but had set her face against my being instructed by anyone else. It is due, however, to my mistress to say of her, that she did not adopt this course of treatment immediately. She at first lacked the depravity indispensable to shutting me up in mental darkness. It was at least necessary for her to have some training in the exercise of irresponsible power, to make her equal to the task of treating me as though I were a brute.

My mistress was, as I have said, a kind and tender-hearted woman; and in the simplicity of her soul she commenced, when I first went to live with her, to treat me as she supposed one human being ought to treat another. In entering upon the duties of a slaveholder, she did not seem to perceive that I sustained to her the relation of a mere chattel, and that for her to treat me as a human being was not only wrong, but dangerously so. Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me. When I went there, she was a pious, warm, and tender-hearted woman. There was no sorrow or suffering for which she had not a tear. She had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner that came within her reach. Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities. Under its influence, the tender heart became stone, and the lamb-like disposition gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness. The first step in her downward course was in her ceasing to instruct me. She now commenced to practice her husband's precepts. She finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband himself. She was not satisfied with simply doing as well as he had commanded; she seemed anxious to do better. Nothing seemed to make her more angry than to see me with a newspaper. She seemed to think that here lay the danger. I have had her rush at me with a face made all up of fury, and snatch from me a newspaper, in a manner that fully revealed her apprehension. She was an apt woman; and a little experience soon demonstrated, to her satisfaction, that education and slavery were incompatible with each other.

From this time I was most narrowly watched. If I was in a separate room any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of having a book, and was at once called to give an account of myself. All this, however, was too late. The first step had been taken. Mistress, in teaching me the alphabet, had given me the inch, and no precaution could prevent me from taking the ell.

The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent to errands, I

always took my book with me, and by doing one part of my errand quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge. I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a testimonial of the gratitude and affection I bear them; but prudence forbids-not that it would injure me, ~ but it might embarrass them; for it is almost an unpardonable offense to teach slaves to read in this Christian country. It is enough to say of the dear little fellows, that they lived on Philpot Street, very near Durgin and Bailey's shipyard. I used to talk this matter of slavery over with them. I would sometimes say to them, I wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be men. "You will be free as soon as you are twenty- one, but I am a slave for life! Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?" These words used to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free.

I was now about twelve-years-old, and the thought of being a slave for life began to bear heavily upon my heart. Just about this time, I got hold of a book entitled "The Columbian Orator." Every opportunity I got, I used to read this book. Among much of other interesting matter, I found in it a dialogue between a master and his slave. The slave was represented as having run away from his master three times. The dialogue represented the conversation which took place between them, when the slave was retaken the third time. In this dialogue, the whole argument in behalf of slavery was brought forward by the master, all of which was disposed of by the slave. The slave was made to say some very smart as, well as impressive things in reply to his master-things which had the desired though unexpected effect; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary emancipation of the slave on the part of the master.

In the same book, I met with one of Sheridan's mighty speeches on and in behalf of Catholic emancipation. These were choice documents to me. I read them over and over again with unabated interest. They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for want of utterance. The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder. What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful vindication of human rights. The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved. The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men. As I read and contemplated the subject, behold that very discontentment which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning to read had

already come, to torment and sting my soul to unutterable anguish. As I writhed under it, I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity. I have often wished myself a beast. I preferred the condition of the meanest reptile to my own. Anything, no matter what, to get rid of thinking! It was this everlasting thinking of my condition that tormented me. There was no getting rid of it. It was pressed upon me by every object within sight or hearing, animate or inanimate. The silver trump of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound, and seen in every thing. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.

I often found myself regretting my own existence, and wishing myself dead; and but for the hope of being free, I have no doubt but that I should have killed myself, or done something for which I should have been killed. While in this state of mind, I was eager to hear anyone speak of slavery. I was a ready listener. Every little while, I could hear something about the abolitionists. It was some time before I found what the word meant. It was always used in such connections as to make it an interesting word to me. If a slave ran away and succeeded in getting clear, or if a slave killed his master, set fire to a barn, or did anything very wrong in the mind of a slaveholder, it was spoken of as the fruit of abolition. Hearing the word in this connection very often, I set about learning what it meant. The dictionary afforded me little or no help. I found it was "the act of abolishing"; but then I did not know what was to be abolished. Here I was perplexed. I did not dare to ask anyone about its meaning, for I was satisfied that it was something they wanted me to know very little about. After a patient waiting, I got one of our city papers, containing an account of the number of petitions from the North, praying for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and of the slave trade between the States. From this time I understood the words abolition and abolitionist, and always drew near when that word was spoken, expecting to hear something of importance to myself and fellow-slaves. The light broke in upon me by degrees. I went one day down on the wharf of Mr. Waters; and seeing two Irishmen unloading a scow of stone, I went, unasked, and helped them. When we had finished, one of them came to me and asked me if I were a slave. I told him I was. He asked, "Are ye a slave for life?" I told him that I was. The good Irishman seemed to be deeply affected by the statement. He said to the other that it was a pity so fine a little fellow as myself should be a slave for life. He said it was a shame to hold me. They both advised me to run away to the North; that I should find friends there, and that I should be free. I pretended not to be interested in what they said, and treated them as if I did not understand them; for I feared they might be treacherous. White men have been known to encourage slaves to escape, and then, to get the reward, catch them and return them to their masters. I was afraid that these seemingly good men might use me so; but I nevertheless remembered their advice, and from that time I resolved to run away. I

looked forward to a time at which it would be safe for me to escape. I was too young to think of doing so immediately; besides, I wished to learn how to write, as I might have occasion to write my own pass. I consoled myself with the hope that I should one day find a good chance. Meanwhile, I would learn to write.

The idea as to how I might learn to write was suggested to me by being in Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard, and frequently seeing the ship carpenters, after hewing, and getting a piece of timber ready for use, write on the timber the name of that part of the ship for which it was intended. When a piece of timber was intended for the larboard side, it would be marked thus-"L." When a piece was for the starboard side, it would be marked thus--"S.F." A piece for the larboard side forward, would be marked thus-"L.F." When a piece was for starboard side forward, it would be marked thus-"S.F." For larboard aft, it would be marked thus-"L.A." For starboard aft, it would be marked thus-"S.A." I soon learned the names of these letters, and for what they were intended when placed upon a piece of timber in the shipyard. I immediately commenced copying them, and in a short time was able to make the four letters named. After that, when I met with any boy who I knew could write, I would tell him I could write as well as he. The next word would be, "I don't believe you. Let me see you try it." I would then make the letters which I had been so fortunate as to learn, and ask him to beat that. In this way I got a good many lessons in writing, which it is quite possible I should never have gotten in any other way. During this time, my copy-book was the board fence, brick wall, and pavement; my pen and ink was a lump of chalk. With these, I learned mainly how to write. I then commenced and continued copying the Italics in Webster's Spelling Book, until I could make them all without looking in the book. By this time, my little Master Thomas had gone to school, and learned how to write, and had written over a number of copy-books. These had been brought home, and shown to some of our near neighbors, and then laid aside. My mistress used to go to class meeting at the Wilk Street meeting-house every Monday afternoon, and leave me to take care of the house. When left thus, I used to spend the time in writing in the spaces left in Master Thomas's copy-book, copying what he had written. I continued to do this until I could write a hand very similar to that of Master Thomas. Thus, after a long, tedious effort for years, I finally succeeded in learning how to write.

Taken from: <http://www.gibbsmagazine.com/learning%2oto%2oread.htm>

The Man Who Was Almost a Man

Richard Wright

1908-1960

Dave struck out across the fields, looking homeward through paling light. Whut's the use of talking wid em niggers in the field? Anyhow, his mother was putting supper on the table. Them niggers can't understand nothing. One of these days he was going to get a gun and practice shooting, then they couldn't talk to him as though he were a little boy. He slowed, looking at the ground. Shucks, Ah ain't scareda them even ef they are biggern me! Aw, Ah know whut Ahma do. Ahm going by ol Joe's store n git that Sears Roebuck catalog n look at them guns. Mebbe Ma will lemme buy one when she gits mah pay from ol man Hawkins. Ahma beg her t gimme some money. Ahm ol enough to hava gun. Ahm seventeen. Almost a man. He strode, feeling his long loose-jointed limbs. Shucks, a man oughta hava little gun aftah he done worked hard all day.

He came in sight of Joe's store. A yellow lantern glowed on the front porch. He mounted steps and went through the screen door, hearing it bang behind him. There was a strong smell of coal oil and mackerel fish. He felt very confident until he saw fat Joe walk in through the rear door, then his courage began to ooze.

"Howdy, Dave! Whutcha want?"

"How yuh, Mistah Joe? Aw, Ah don wana buy nothing. Ah jus wanted t see ef yuhd lemme look at tha catalog erwhile."

"Sure! You wanna see it here?"

"Nawsuh. Ah wans t take it home wid me. Ah'll bring it back termorrow when Ah come in from the fiels."

"You planning on buying something?"

"Yessuh."

"Your ma letting you have your own money now?"

"Shucks. Mistah Joe, Ahm gittin t be a man like anybody else!"

Joe laughed and wiped his greasy white face with a red bandanna.

"Whut you planning on buyin?"

Dave looked at the floor, scratched his head, scratched his thigh, and smiled. Then he looked up shyly.

"Ah'll tell yuh, Mistah Joe, ef yuh promise yuh won't tell."

"I promise."

"Waal, Ahma buy a gun."

"A gun? Whut you want with a gun?"

"Ah wanna keep it."

"You ain't nothing but a boy. You don't need a gun."

"Aw, lemme have the catalog, Mistah Joe. Ah'll bring it back."

Joe walked through the rear door. Dave was elated. He looked around at barrels of sugar and flour. He heard Joe coming back. He craned his neck to see if he were bringing the book. Yeah, he's got it. Gawddog, he's got it!

"Here, but be sure you bring it back. It's the only one I got."

"Sho, Mistah Joe."

"Say, if you wanna buy a gun, why don't you buy one from me? I gotta gun to sell."

"Will it shoot?"

"Sure it'll shoot."

"Whut kind is it?"

"Oh, it's kinda old ... a left-hand Wheeler. A pistol. A big one."

"Is it got bullets in it?"

"It's loaded."

"Kin Ah see it?"

"Where's your money?"

"Whut yuh wan fer it?"

"I'll let you have it for two dollahs."

"Just two dollahs? Shucks, Ah could buy tha when Ah git mah pay."

"I'll have it here when you want it."

"Awright, suh. Ah be in fer it."

He went through the door, hearing it slam again behind him. Ahma git some money from Ma n buy me a gun! Only two dollahs! He tucked the thick catalogue under his arm and hurried.

"Where yuh been, boy?" His mother held a steaming dish of black-eyed peas.

"Aw, Ma, Ah jus stopped down the road t talk wid the boys."

"Yuh know bettah t keep suppah waitin."

He sat down, resting the catalogue on the edge of the table.

"Yuh git up from there and git to the well n wash yosef! Ah ain feedin no hogs in mah house!"

She grabbed his shoulder and pushed him. He stumbled out of the room, then came back to get the catalogue.

"Whut this?"

"Aw, Ma, it's jusa catlog."

"Who yuh git it from?"

"From Joe, down at the sto."

"Waal, thas good. We kin use it in the outhouse."

"Naw, Ma." He grabbed for it. "Gimme ma catlog, Ma." She held onto it and glared at him.

"Quit hollerin at me! Whut's wrong wid yuh? Yuh crazy?"

"But Ma, please. It am mine! It's Joe's! He tol me t bring it back t im termorrow."

She gave up the book. He stumbled down the back steps, hugging the thick book under his arm. When he had splashed water on his face and hands, he groped back to the kitchen and fumbled in a corner for the towel. *I-fe* bumped into a chair; it clattered to the floor. The catalogue sprawled at his feet. When he had dried his eyes he snatched up the book and held it agaifl under his arm. His mother stood watching him.

"Now, ef yuh gonna act a fool over that ol book, Ah'll take it n burn it

"Naw, Ma, please."

"Waal, set down n be still!"

He sat down and drew the oil lamp close. He thumbed page after page, unaware of the food his mother set on the table. His father came in. Then his small brother.

"Whutcha got there, Dave?" his father asked.

"Jusa catlog," he answered, not looking up.

"Yeah, here they is!" His eyes glowed at blue-and-black revolvers. He glanced up, feeling sudden guilt. His father was watching him. He eased the book under the table and rested it on his knees. After the blessing was asked, he ate. He scooped up peas and swallowed fat meat without chewing. Buttermilk helped to wash it down. He did not want to mention money before his father. He would do much better by cornering his mother when she was alone. He looked at his father uneasily out of the edge of his eye.

"Boy, how come yuh don quit foolin wid tha book n eat yo suppah?"

"Yessuh."

"How you n ol man Hawkins gitten erlong?"

"Can't yuh hear? Why don yuh lissen? Ah ast yu how wuz yuh n ol man Hawkins gittin erlong?"

"Oh, swell, Pa. Ah plows mo lan than anybody over there."

"Waal, yuh oughta keep you mind on whut yuh doin."

"Yessuh."

He poured his plate full of molasses and sopped it up slowly with a chunk of cornbread. When his father and brother had left the kitchen, he still sat and looked again at the guns in the catalogue, longing to muster courage enough to present his case to his mother. Lawd, ef Ah only had tha pretty one! He could almost feel the slickness of the weapon with his fingers. If he had a gun like that he would polish it and keep it shining so it would never rust. N Ah'd keep it loaded, by Gawd!

"Ma?" His voice was hesitant.

"Hunh?"

"Ol man Hawkins give yuh mah money yit?"

"Yeah, but am no usa yuh thinking bout throwin nona it erway. Ahm keeping tha money sos yuh kin have does t go to school this winter."

He rose and went to her side with the open catalogue in his palms. She was washing dishes, her head bent low over a pan. Shyly he raised the book. When he spoke, his voice was husky, faint.

“Ma, Gawd knows Ah wans one of these.”

“One of whut?” she asked, not raising her eyes.

“One of these,” he said again, not daring even to point. She glanced up at the page, then at him with wide eyes.

“Nigger, is yuh gone plumb crazy?”

“Aw, Ma —“

“Cit outta here! Don yuh talk t me bout no gun! Yuh a fool!”

“Ma, Ah kin buy one fer two dollahs.”

“Not ef Ah knows it, yuh am!”

“But yuh promised me one —“

“Ah don care what Ah promised! Yuh am nothing but a boy yit!”

“Ma, ef yuh lemme buy one Ah’ll *never* ast yuh fer nothing no mo.”

“Ah tol yuh t git outta here! Yuh am gonna toucha penny of tha money fer no gun! Thas how come Ah has Mistah Hawkins t pay yo wages t me, cause Ah knows yuh am got no sense.”

“But, Ma, we needa gun. Pa am got no gun. We needa gun in the house. Yuh kin never tell whut might happen.”

“Now don yuh try to maka fool outta me, boy! Ef we did hava gun, yuh wouldn’t have it!”

He laid the catalogue down and slipped his arm around her waist.

“Aw, Ma, Ah done worked hard alla summer n am ast yuh fer nothing, is Ah, now?”

“Thas whut yuh spose t do!”

“But Ma, Ah wans a gun. Yuh kin lemme have two dollahs outta mah money. Please, Ma. I kin give it to Pa... . Please, Ma! Ah loves yuh, Ma.”

When she spoke her voice came soft and low.

“What yu wan wida gun, Dave? Yuh don need no gun. Yuh’ll git in trouble. N ef yo pa jus thought Ah let yuh have money t buy a gun he’d hava fit.”

“Ah’ll hide it, Ma. It am but two dollahs.”

“Lawd, chil, whut’s wrong wid yuh?”

“Am nothin wrong. Ma. Ahm almos a man now. Ah wans a gun.”

“Who gonna sell yuh a gun?”

“’01 Joe at the sto.”

“N it don cos but two dollahs?”

“Thas all, Ma. Jus two dollahs. Please, Ma.”

She was stacking the plates away; her hands moved slowly, reflectively Dave kept an anxious silence. Finally, she turned to him.

“Ah’ll let yuh git tha gun ef yuh promise me one thing.”

“What’s tha, Ma?”

“Yuh bring it straight back t me, yuh hear? It be fer Pa.”

“Yessum! Lemme go now, Ma.”

She stooped, turned slightly to one side, raised the hem of her dress, rolled down the top of her stocking, and came up with a slender wad of bills.

“Here,” she said. “Lawd knows yuh don need no gun. But yer pa does. Yuh bring it right back t me, yuh hear? Ahma put it up. Now ef yuh don, Ahma have yuh pa lick yuh so hard yuh won fergit it.”

“Yessum.”

He took the money, ran down the steps, and across the yard.

“Dave! Yuuuuuh Daaaaave!”

He heard, but he was not going to stop now. “Now, Lawd!”

The first movement he made the following morning was to reach under his pillow for the gun. In the gray light of dawn he held it loosely, feeling a sense of power. Could kill a man with a gun like this. Kill anybody, black or white. And if he were holding his gun in his hand, nobody could run over him; they would have to respect him. It was a big gun, with a long barrel and a heavy handle. He raised and lowered it in his hand, marveling at its weight.

He had not come straight home with it as his mother had asked; instead he had stayed out in the fields, holding the weapon in his hand, aiming it now and then at some imaginary foe. But he had not fired it; he had been afraid that his father might hear. Also he was not sure he knew how to fire it.

To avoid surrendering the pistol he had not come into the house until he knew that they were all asleep. When his mother had tiptoed to his bedside late that night and demanded the gun, he had first played possum; then he had told her that the gun was hidden outdoors, that he would bring it to her in the morning. Now he lay

turning it slowly in his hands. He broke it, took out the cartridges, felt them, and then put them back.

He slid out of bed, got a long strip of old flannel from a trunk, wrapped the gun in it, and tied it to his naked thigh while it was still loaded. He did not go in to breakfast. Even though it was not yet daylight, he started for Jim Hawkins' plantation. Just as the sun was rising he reached the barns where the mules and plows were kept.

"Hey! That you, Dave?"

He turned. Jim Hawkins stood eying him suspiciously.

"What're yuh doing here so early?"

"Ah didn't know Ah wuz gittin up so early, Mistah Hawkins. Ah was fixin t hitch up ol Jenny n take her t the fiels."

"Good. Since you're so early, how about plowing that stretch down by the woods?"

"Suits me, Mistah Hawkins."

"O.K. Go to it!"

He hitched Jenny to a plow and started across the fields. Hot dog! This was just what he wanted. If he could get down by the woods, he could shoot his gun and nobody would hear. He walked behind the plow, hearing the traces creaking, feeling the gun tied tight to his thigh.

When he reached the woods, he plowed two whole rows before he decided to take out the gun. Finally, he stopped, looked in all directions, then untied the gun and held it in his hand. He turned to the mule and smiled.

"Know whut this is, Jenny? Naw, yuh wouldn know! Yuhs jusa ol mule! Anyhow, this is a gun, n it kin shoot, by Gawd!"

He held the gun at arm's length. Whut t hell, Ahma shoot this thing! He looked at Jenny again.

"Lissen here, Jenny! When Ah pull this ol trigger, Ah don wan yuh t run n acka fool now!"

Jenny stood with head down, her short ears pricked straight. Dave walked off about twenty feet, held the gun far out from him at arm's length, and turned his head. Hell, he told himself, Ah am afraid. The gun felt loose in his fingers; he waved it wildly for a moment. The he shut his eyes and tightened his forefinger. Bloom! A report half deafened him and he thought his right hand was torn from his arm. He heard Jenny whinnying and galloping over the field, and he found himself on his knees, squeezing his fingers hard between his legs. His hand was numb; he jammed it into his mouth, trying to warm it, trying to stop the pain. The gun lay at his feet. He did not quite know what had happened. He stood up and stared at the gun as though it were a living thing. He gritted his teeth and kicked the gun. Yuh almos. broke mah arm! He turned to look for Jenny; she was far over the fields, tossing her head and kicking wildly.

"Hol on there, ol mule!"

When he caught up with her she stood trembling, walling her big white eyes at him. The plow was far away; the traces had broken. Then Dave stopped short, looking, not believing. Jenny was bleeding. Her left side was red and wet with blood. He went closer. Lawd, have mercy! Wondah did Ah shoot this mule? He grabbed for Jenny's mane. She flinched, snorted, whirled, tossing her head.

"Hol on now! Hol on."

Then he saw the hole in Jenny's side, right between the ribs. It was round, wet, red. A crimson stream streaked down the front leg, flowing fast. Good Gawd! Ah wuzn't shootin at tha mule. He felt panic. He knew he had to stop that blood, or Jenny would bleed to death. He had never seen so much blood in all his life. He chased the mule for half a mile, trying to catch her. Finally she stopped, breathing hard, stumpy tail half arched. He caught her mane and led her back to where the plow and gun lay. Then he stopped and grabbed handfuls of damp black earth and tried to plug the bullet hole. Jenny shuddered, whinnied, and broke from him.

"Hol on! Hol on now!"

He tried to plug it again, but blood came anyhow. His fingers were hot and sticky He rubbed dirt into his palms, trying to dry them. Then again he attempted to plug the bullet hole, but Jenny shied away, kicking her heels high. He stood helpless. He had to do something. He ran at Jenny; she dodged him. He watched a red stream of blood flow down Jenny's leg and form a bright pool at her feet.

"Jenny... Jenny," he called weakly.

His lips trembled. She's bleeding t death! He looked in the direction of home, wanting to go back, wanting to get help. But he saw the pistol lying in the damp black clay. He had a queer feeling that if he only did something, this would not be; Jenny would not be there bleeding to death.

When he went to her this time, she did not move. She stood with sleepy, dreamy eyes; and when he touched her she gave a low-pitched whinny and knelt to the ground, her front knees slopping in blood.

"Jenny... Jenny" he whispered.

For a long time she held her neck erect; then her head sank, slowly. Her ribs swelled with a mighty heave and she went over.

Dave's stomach felt empty, very empty. He picked up the gun and held it gingerly between his thumb and forefinger. He buried it at the foot of a tree. He took a stick to cover the pool of blood with dirt — but what was

the use? There was Jenny lying with her mouth open and her eyes walled and glassy. He could not tell Jim Hawkins he had shot his mule. But he had to tell something. Yeah, Ah'll tell em Jenny started gittin wil n fell on the joint of the plow.... But that would hardly happen to a mule. He walked across the field slowly, head down.

It was sunset. Two of Jim Hawkins' men were over near the edge of the woods digging a hole in which to bury Jenny Dave was surrounded by a knot of people, all of whom were looking down at the dead mule.

"I don't see how in the world it happened," said Jim Hawkins for the tenth time.

The crowd parted and Dave's mother, father, and small brother pushed into the center.

"Where Dave?" his mother called. "There he is," said Jim Hawkins. His mother grabbed him.

"Whut happened, Dave? Whut yuh done?" "Nothin."

"C mon, boy, talk," his father said.

Dave took a deep breath and told the story he knew nobody believed.

"Waal," he drawled. "Ah brung ol Jenny down here sos Ah could do mah plowin. Ah plowed bout two rows, just like yuh see." He stopped and pointed at the long rows of upturned earth. "Then somethin musta been wrong wid ol Jenny. She wouldn ack right a-tall. She started snortin n kickin her heels. Ah tried t hol her, but she pulled erway, rearm n goin in. Then when the point of the plow was stickin up in the air, she swung erroun n twisted herself back on it... She stuck herself n started t bleed. N fo Ah could do anything, she wuz dead."

"Did you ever hear of anything like that in all your life?" asked Jim Hawkins.

There were white and black standing in the crowd. They murmured. Dave's mother came close to him and looked hard into his face. "Tell the truth, Dave," she said.

"Looks like a bullet hole to me," said one man.

"Dave, whut yuh do wid the gun?" his mother asked.

The crowd surged in, looking at him. He jammed his hands into his pockets, shook his head slowly from left to right, and backed away. His eyes were wide and painful.

"Did he hava gun?" asked Jim Hawkins.

"By Gawd, Ah tol yuh tha wuz a gun wound," said a man, slapping his thigh.

His father caught his shoulders and shook him till his teeth rattled.

"Tell whut happened, yuh rascal! Tell whut

Dave looked at Jenny's stiff legs and began to cry.

"Whut yuh do wid tha gun?" his mother asked.

"What wuz he doin wida gun?" his father asked.

"Come on and tell the truth," said Hawkins. "Ain't nobody going to hurt you....

His mother crowded close to him.

"Did yuh shoot tha mule, Dave?"

Dave cried, seeing blurred white and black faces.

"Ahh ddinn gggo tt sshoot hher. . . . Ah ssswear ffo Gawd Ahh ddin....Ah wuz a-tryin t sssee ef the old gggun would sshoot — "Where yuh git the gun from?" his father asked.

"Ah got it from Joe, at the sto." "Where yuh git the money?" "Ma give it t me."

"He kept worryin me, Bob. Ah had t. Ah tol im t bring the gun right back t me. . . . It was fer yuh, the gun."

"But how yuh happen to shoot that mule?" asked Jim Hawkins.

"Ah wuzn shootin at the mule, Mistah Hawkins. The gun jumped when Ah pulled the trigger. ... N fo Ah knowed anythin Jenny was there a-bleedin."

Somebody in the crowd laughed. Jim Hawkins walked close to Dave and looked into his face.

"Well, looks like you have bought you a mule, Dave."

"Ah swear fo Gawd, Ah didn go t kill the mule, Mistah Hawkins!"

"But you killed her!"

All the crowd was laughing now. They stood on tiptoe and poked heads over one another's shoulders.

"Well, boy, looks like yuh done bought a dead mule! Hahaha!"

"Am tha ershame."

"Hohohohoho."

Dave stood, head down, twisting his feet in the dirt.

"Well, you needn't worry about it, Bob," said Jim Hawkins to Dave's father. "Just let the boy keep on working and pay me two dollars a month."

"Whut yuh wan fer yo mule, Mistah Hawkins?" Jim Hawkins screwed up his eyes.

"Fifty dollars."

"Whut yuh do wid tha gun?" Dave's father demanded. Dave said nothing.

“Yuh wan me t take a tree n beat yuh till yuh talk!” “Nawsuh!”

“Whut yuh do wid it?” “Ah throwed it erway.”

“Where?”

“Ah. . . Ah throwed it in the creek.”

“Waal, c mon home. N firs thing in the mawnin git to tha creek n fin tha gun.”

“Yessuh.”

“Whut yuh pay fer it?”

“Two dollahs.”

“Take tha gun n git yo money back n carry it to Mistah Hawkins, yuh hear? N don fergit Ahma lam you black bottom good fer this! Now march yosef on home, suh!”

Dave turned and walked slowly. He heard people laughing. Dave glared~ his eyes welling with tears. Hot anger bubbled in him. Then he swallowed and stumbled on.

That night Dave did not sleep. He was glad that he had gotten out of killing the mule so easily, but he was hurt. Something hot seemed to turn over inside him each time he remembered how they had laughed. He tossed on his bed, feeling his hard pillow. N Pa says he’s gonna beat me.... He remembered other beatings, and his back quivered. Naw, flaw, Ah sho don wan im t beat me tha way no mo. Dam em all! Nobody ever gave him anything. All he did was work. They treat me like a mule, n then they beat me. He gritted his teeth. N Ma had t tell on me.

Well, if he had to, he would take old man Hawkins that two dollars. But that meant selling the gun. And he wanted to keep that gun. Fifty dollars for a dead mule.

He turned over, thinking how he had fired the gun. He had an itch to fire it again. Ef other men kin shoota gun, by Gawd, Ah kin! He was still, listening. Mebbe they all sleepin now. The house was still. He heard the soft breathing of his brother. Yes, now! He would go down and get that gun and see if he could fire it! He eased out of bed and slipped into overalls.

The moon was bright. He ran almost all the way to the edge of the woods. He stumbled over the ground, looking for the spot where he had buried the gun. Yeah, here it is. Like a hungry dog scratching for a bone, he pawed it up. He puffed his black cheeks and blew dirt from the trigger and barrel. He broke it and found four cartridges unshot. He looked around; the fields were filled with silence and moonlight. He clutched the gun stiff and hard in his fingers. But, as soon as he wanted to pull the trigger, he shut his eyes and turned his head. Naw, Ah can’t shoot wid mah eyes closed n mah head turned. With effort he held his eyes open; then he squeezed. *Bloooooom!* He was stiff, not breathing. The gun was still in his hands. Dammit, he’d done it! He fired again. *Bloooooom!* He smiled. *Bloooooom! Bloooooom! Click, click.* There! It was empty If anybody could shoot a gun, he could. He put the gun into his hip pocket and started across the fields.

When he reached the top of a ridge he stood straight and proud in the moonlight, looking at Jim Hawkins’ big white house, feeling the gun sagging in his pocket. Lawd, ef Ah had just one mo bullet Ah’d taka shot at tha house. Ah’d like t scare ol man Hawkins jusa little. . . Jusa enough t let im know Dave Saunders is a man.

To his left the road curved, running to the tracks of the Illinois Central. He jerked his head, listening. From far off came a faint *hoooof-hoooof; hoooofhoooof*.... He stood rigid. Two dollahs a mont. Les see now.... Tha means it’ll take bout two years. Shucks! Ah’ll be dam!

He started down the road, toward the tracks. Yeah, here she comes! He stood beside the track and held himself stiffly. Here she comes, erroun the ben. . . . C mon, yuh slow poke! C mon! He had his hand on his gun; something quivered in his stomach. Then the train thundered past, the gray and brown box cars rumbling and clinking. He gripped the gun tightly; then he jerked his hand out of his pocket. Ah betcha Bill wouldn’t do it! Ah betcha. . . . The cars slid past, steel grinding upon steel. Ahm ridin yuh ternight, so hep me Gawd! He was hot all over. He hesitated just a moment; then he grabbed, pulled atop of a car, and lay flat. He felt his pocket; the gun was still there. Ahead the long rails were glinting in the moonlight, stretching away, away to somewhere, somewhere where he could be a man. ... (1961)

“The Hill We Climb” – Amanda Gorman

When the day comes, we ask ourselves where can we find light in this never-ending shade?

The loss we carry, a sea we must wade.

We’ve braved the belly of the beast.

We’ve learned that quiet isn’t always peace,
and the norms and notions of what “just” is isn’t always justice.

And yet, the dawn is ours before we knew it.

Somehow we do it.

Somehow we’ve weathered and witnessed a nation that isn’t broken,
but simply unfinished.

We, the successors of a country and a time where a skinny Black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president, only to find herself reciting for one.

And yes, we are far from polished, far from pristine,
but that doesn’t mean we are striving to form a union that is perfect.

We are striving to forge our union with purpose.

To compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters, and conditions of man.

And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us, but what stands before us.

We close the divide because we know, to put our future first, we must first put our differences aside.

We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another.

We seek harm to none and harmony for all.

Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:

That even as we grieved, we grew.

That even as we hurt, we hoped.

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.

Scripture tells us to envision that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree and no one shall make them afraid.

If we’re to live up to our own time, then victory won’t lie in the blade, but in all the bridges we’ve made.

That is the promise to glade, the hill we climb, if only we dare.

It’s because being American is more than a pride we inherit.

It’s the past we step into and how we repair it.

We’ve seen a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it.

Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy.

This effort very nearly succeeded.

But while democracy can be periodically delayed,
it can never be permanently defeated.

In this truth, in this faith, we trust,

for while we have our eyes on the future, history has its eyes on us.

This is the era of just redemption.

We feared it at its inception.

We did not feel prepared to be the heirs of such a terrifying hour,
but within it, we found the power to author a new chapter, to offer hope and laughter to
ourselves.

So while once we asked, 'How could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?' now we
assert, 'How could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?'

We will not march back to what was, but move to what shall be:

A country that is bruised but whole, benevolent but bold, fierce and free.

We will not be turned around or interrupted by intimidation because we know our
inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation.

Our blunders become their burdens.

But one thing is certain:

If we merge mercy with might, and might with right, then love becomes our legacy and
change, our children's birthright.

So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left.

With every breath from my bronze-pounded chest, we will raise this wounded world into
a wondrous one.

We will rise from the golden hills of the west.

We will rise from the wind-swept north-east where our forefathers first realized
revolution.

We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the midwestern states.

We will rise from the sun-baked south.

We will rebuild, reconcile, and recover.

In every known nook of our nation, in every corner called our country,
our people, diverse and beautiful, will emerge, battered and beautiful.

When day comes, we step out of the shade, aflame and unafraid.

The new dawn blooms as we free it.

For there is always light,

if only we're brave enough to see it.

If only we're brave enough to be it.

“Let America be American Again” – Langston Hughes

Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed—
Let it be that great strong land of love
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

O, let my land be a land where Liberty
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There’s never been equality for me,
Nor freedom in this “homeland of the free.”)

*Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?*

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the Negro bearing slavery’s scars.
I am the red man driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek—
And finding only the same old stupid plan
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

I am the young man, full of strength and hope,
Tangled in that ancient endless chain
Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!
Of grab the gold! Of grab the ways of satisfying need!
Of work the men! Of take the pay!
Of owning everything for one’s own greed!

I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil.
I am the worker sold to the machine.
I am the Negro, servant to you all.

I am the people, humble, hungry, mean—
Hungry yet today despite the dream.
Beaten yet today—O, Pioneers!
I am the man who never got ahead,
The poorest worker bartered through the years.

Yet I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream
In the Old World while still a serf of kings,
Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,
That even yet its mighty daring sings
In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned
That's made America the land it has become.
O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas
In search of what I meant to be my home—
For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,
And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,
And torn from Black Africa's strand I came
To build a "homeland of the free."

The free?

Who said the free? Not me?
Surely not me? The millions on relief today?
The millions shot down when we strike?
The millions who have nothing for our pay?
For all the dreams we've dreamed
And all the songs we've sung
And all the hopes we've held
And all the flags we've hung,
The millions who have nothing for our pay—
Except the dream that's almost dead today.

O, let America be America again—
The land that never has been yet—
And yet must be—the land where *every* man is free.
The land that's mine—the poor man's, Indian's, Negro's, ME—
Who made America,
Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,
Must bring back our mighty dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name you choose—
The steel of freedom does not stain.
From those who live like leeches on the people's lives,

We must take back our land again,
America!

O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—
America will be!

Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,
The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,
We, the people, must redeem
The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.
The mountains and the endless plain—
All, all the stretch of these great green states—
And make America again!