# America

BY CLAUDE MCKAY

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness, 1

And sinks into my throat her tiger’s tooth,

Stealing my breath of life, I will confess

I love this cultured hell that tests my youth.

Her vigor flows like tides into my blood, 5

Giving me strength erect against her hate,

Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.

Yet, as a rebel fronts a king in state,

I stand within her walls with not a shred

Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer. 10

Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,

And see her might and granite wonders there,

Beneath the touch of Time’s unerring hand,

Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand. 14

1. Why does McKay utilize a metaphor in lines 1-4?
2. Identify the use of simile in lines 5-14. What are the effects?
3. What is the tone of the poem? How is it created?

# America

BY CLAUDE MCKAY

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness, 1

And sinks into my throat her tiger’s tooth,

Stealing my breath of life, I will confess

I love this cultured hell that tests my youth.

Her vigor flows like tides into my blood, 5

Giving me strength erect against her hate,

Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.

Yet, as a rebel fronts a king in state,

I stand within her walls with not a shred

Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer. 10

Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,

And see her might and granite wonders there,

Beneath the touch of Time’s unerring hand,

Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand. 14

1. Why does McKay utilize a metaphor in lines 1-4?
2. Identify the use of simile in lines 5-14. What are the effects?
3. What is the tone of the poem? How is it created?

You and your whole race. By Langston Hughes

You and your whole race.

Look down upon the town in which you live

And be ashamed.

Look down upon white folks

And upon yourselves

And be ashamed

That such supine\* poverty exists there, \*failure to act due to moral weakness

That such stupid ignorance breeds children there

Behind such humble shelters of despair—

That you yourselves have not the sense to care

Nor the manhood to stand up and say

I dare you to come one step nearer, evil world,

With your hands of greed seeking to touch my throat,

I dare you to come one step nearer me:

When you can say that

you will be free!

1. What is significant about having the first line as an independent sentence?
2. What tone has Hughes taken in this poem?
3. To whom is he directing his message? Why?
4. What is he implying at the end of the poem?
5. How is this poem’s message different from some of the other poems you have analyzed?

You and your whole race. By Langston Hughes

You and your whole race.

Look down upon the town in which you live

And be ashamed.

Look down upon white folks

And upon yourselves

And be ashamed

That such supine\* poverty exists there, \*failure to act due to moral weakness

That such stupid ignorance breeds children there

Behind such humble shelters of despair—

That you yourselves have not the sense to care

Nor the manhood to stand up and say

I dare you to come one step nearer, evil world,

With your hands of greed seeking to touch my throat,

I dare you to come one step nearer me:

When you can say that

you will be free!

1. What is significant about having the first line as an independent sentence?
2. What tone has Hughes taken in this poem?
3. To whom is he directing his message? Why?
4. What is he implying at the end of the poem?
5. How is this poem’s message different from some of the other poems you have analyzed?