1. **Harlem (Langston Hughes)**

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up   
like a raisin in the sun?   
Or fester like a sore—   
And then run?   
Does it stink like rotten meat?   
Or crust and sugar over—   
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags   
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

1. **The Negro Speaks of Rivers (Langston Hughes)**

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the

flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln

went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy

bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

1. **I, Too (Langston Hughes)**

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | I, too, sing America.  I am the darker brother. They send me to eat in the kitchen When company comes, But I laugh, And eat well, And grow strong.  Tomorrow, I'll be at the table When company comes. Nobody'll dare Say to me, "Eat in the kitchen," Then.  Besides, They'll see how beautiful I am And be ashamed--  I, too, am America. | |

1. **The Weary Blues (Langston Hughes)**

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| Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,  Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,  I heard a Negro play.  Down on Lenox Avenue the other night  By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light  He did a lazy sway . . .  He did a lazy sway . . .  To the tune o' those Weary Blues.  With his ebony hands on each ivory key  He made that poor piano moan with melody.  O Blues!  Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool  He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.  Sweet Blues!  Coming from a black man's soul.  O Blues!  In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone  I heard that Negro sing, that old piano moan--  "Ain't got nobody in all this world,  Ain't got nobody but ma self.  I's gwine to quit ma frownin'  And put ma troubles on the shelf."  Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor.  He played a few chords then he sang some more--  "I got the Weary Blues  And I can't be satisfied.  Got the Weary Blues  And can't be satisfied--  I ain't happy no mo'  And I wish that I had died."  And far into the night he crooned that tune.  The stars went out and so did the moon.  The singer stopped playing and went to bed  While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.  He slept like a rock or a man that's dead. |  |

1. **The City (Langston Hughes)**

In the morning the city  
Spreads its wings  
Making a song  
In stone that sings.  
  
In the evening the city  
Goes to bed  
Hanging lights   
Above its head.

1. **If We Must Die (Claude McKay)**

If we must die, let it not be like hogs

Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,

While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,

Making their mock at our accursèd lot.

If we must die, O let us nobly die,

So that our precious blood may not be shed

In vain; then even the monsters we defy

Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!

O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!

Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,

And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!

What though before us lies the open grave?

Like men we’ll face the murderous, cowardly pack,

Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

1. **Any Human To Another (Countee Cullen)**

The ills I sorrow at  
Not me alone  
Like an arrow  
Pierce to the marrow,  
Through the fat  
And past the bone.  
Your grief and mine  
Must intertwine  
Like sea and river  
Be fused and mingle  
Diverse yet single  
Forever and forever.

Let no man be so proud  
And confident,  
To think he is allowed  
A little tent  
Pitched in a meadow  
Of sun and shadow  
All his own.

Joy may be shy, unique,  
Friendly to a few,  
Sorrow never scorned   
to speak  
To any who  
Were false or true.

Your every grief  
Like a blade  
Shining and unsheathed  
Must strike me down.  
Of bitter aloes wreathed,  
My sorrow must be laid  
On your head like a crown.

1. **Storm Ending (Jean Toomer)**

Thunder blossoms gorgeously above our heads,

Great, hollow, bell-like flowers,

Rumbling in the wind,

Stretching clappers to strike our ears . . .

Full-lipped flowers

Bitten by the sun

Bleeding rain

Dripping rain like golden honey—

And the sweet earth flying from the thunder.

1. **A Black Man Talks of Reaping (Arna Bontemps)**

I have sown beside all waters in my day

I planted deep, within my heart the fear

That wind or fowl would take the grain away.

I planted safe against this stark, lean year.

I scattered seed enough to plant the land

In rows from Canada to Mexico

But for my reaping only what the hand

Can hold at once is all that I can show.

Yet what I sowed and what the orchard yields

My brother' sons are gathering stalk and root,

Small wonder then my children glean in fields

They have not sown, and feed on bitter fruits