

College Guild

P.O. Box 6448, Brunswick, ME 04011

POETRY CLUB III

Unit 4 of 7

Poems by Langston Hughes and Ezra Pound

James Mercer Langston Hughes was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist from Joplin, Missouri. He was one of the earliest innovators of the then-new literary art form called jazz poetry. Hughes is best known as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance in New York City. He famously wrote about the period “the negro was in vogue”; this was later paraphrased as “when Harlem was in vogue”.

DEMOCRACY

Democracy will not come
 Today, this year
 Nor ever
 Through compromise and fear.
 I have as much right
 As the other fellow has
 To stand
 On my two feet
 And own the land.
 I tire so of hearing people say,
 Let things take their course.
 Tomorrow is another day.
 I do not need my freedom when I'm dead.
 I cannot live on tomorrow's bread.
 Freedom
 Is a strong seed
 Planted
 In a great need.
 I live here, too.
 I want freedom
 Just as you.

LIFE IS FINE

I went down to the river,
 I set down on the bank.
 I tried to think but couldn't
 So I jumped in and sank.

I came up once and hollered!
 I came up twice and cried!
 If that water hadn't a-been so cold
 I might have sunk and died.

But it was Cold in that water! It was Cold!

I took the elevator
 Sixteen floors above the ground.
 I thought about my baby
 and thought I would jump down.

I stood there and I hollered!
 I stood there and I cried!
 If it hadn't a-been so high
 I might've jumped and died.

But it was High up there! It was high!

So since I'm still here livin',
 I guess I will live on.
 I could've died for love

But for livin' I was born

Though you may hear me holler,
And you may see me cry –
I'll be dogged, sweet baby,
If you gonna see me die.

Life is fine! Fine as wine! Life is Fine!

Ezra Weston Loomis Pound was an expatriate American poet and critic, and a major figure in the early modernist movement. His contribution to poetry began with his development of imagism, a movement derived from classical Chinese and Japanese poetry, stressing clarity, precision and economy of language. His best known works include "Ripostes", "Hugh Selwyn Mauberly" and the unfinished, 116 section epic, "The Cantos".

BALLAD FOR GLOOM

For God, our God is a gallant foe
That playeth behind the veil.
I have loved my God as a child at heart
That seeketh deep bosoms for rest,
I have loved my God as a maid to man—
But lo, this thing is best:
To love your God as a gallant foe that plays behind the veil;
To meet your God as the night winds meet beyond Arcturus' pale.
I have played with God for a woman,
I have staked with my God for truth,
I have lost to my God as a man, clear-eyed—
His dice be not of ruth.
For I am made as a naked blade,
But hear ye this thing in sooth:
Who loseth to God as man to man
Shall win at the turn of the game.
I have drawn my blade where the lightnings meet
But the ending is the same:
Who loseth to God as the sword blades lose
Shall win at the end of the game.
For God, our God is a gallant foe that playeth behind the veil.
Whom God deigns not to overthrow hath need of triple mail.

SALUTATION

O generation of the thoroughly smug
and thoroughly uncomfortable,
I have seen fishermen picnicking in the sun,
I have seen them with untidy families,
I have seen their smiles full of teeth,
and heard ungainly laughter.
And I am happier than you are,
And they were happier than I am;
And the fish swim in the lake
and do not even own clothing.

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes