

If We Must Die

by Claude McKay

Name _____

Period _____

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 accursed 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!

Vocabulary Directions: Using the poem above define the vocabulary using the context of the poem as your guide.

1. Penned

2. Inglorious

3. Mock

4. Accursed

5. Nobly

6. Constrained

7. Kinsman

8. Death-blow

1. Who is the author referring to when he says, "if we must die"?

2. How does the author compare the death of hogs to his own possible demise?

3. Who are the hungry dogs that mock his people?

4. How does the author, if he has to die, prefer to die?

5. What two groups is the author referring to when he claims that, " the monsters we defy shall be constrained to honor us though

6. "O kinsman! We must meet the common foe!". What two groups is the author referring to with this statement?

7. What action does the author wish to take in order to gain respect and show bravery in the, "face of the murderous, cowardly

8. What aspects of American society does the author wish to fight back against?

9. How does this poem show the changing role in society for African Americans during the 1920s?

10. What role did World War I play in the changing role of African Americans in society?

Written Assignment:

Using the pages provided in this packet the students will create a literary review of the poem as if they were critics for the Amsterdam News in 1928. In the review the students should analyze the poem and explain how it relates to the changes in society for African Americans in the 1920s.

