

Advanced English 9 CP
Audino

The Democratic Order: Such Things in Twenty Years I Understood

My father,
(back blistered)
beat me
because I
could not
stop crying.
He'd had
enough 'fuss'
he said
for one damn
voting day.

– Alice Walker

History

The past has been a mint
Of blood and sorrow,
That must not be
True of tomorrow.

– Langston Hughes

Georgia Dusk

Sometimes there's a wind in the Georgia dusk
That cries and cries and cries
In lonely pity through the Georgia dusk
Veiling what the darkness hides.

Sometimes there's blood in the Georgia dusk
Left by a streak of sun,
A crimson trickle in the Georgia dusk.
Whose blood? ... Everyone's.

Sometimes a wind in the Georgia dusk
Scatters hate like seed
To sprout their bitter barriers
Where the sunsets bleed.

– Langston Hughes

Ballad of Birmingham

(On the bombing of a church in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963)

"Mother dear, may I go downtown
instead of out to play,
and march the streets of Birmingham
in a Freedom March today?"

"No, baby, no, you may not go,
for the dogs are fierce and wild,
and clubs and hoses, guns and jails
ain't good for a little child."

"But, mother, I won't be alone.
Other children will go with me,
and march the streets of Birmingham
to make our country free."

"No, baby, no, you may not go,
for I fear those guns will fire.
But you may go to church instead
and sing in the children's choir."

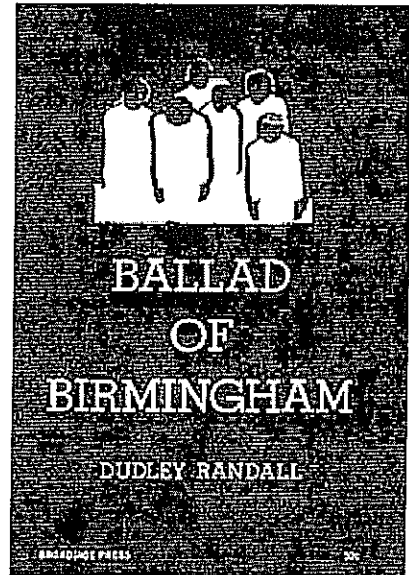
She has combed and brushed her night-dark hair,
and bathed rose petal sweet,
and drawn white gloves on her small brown hands,
and white shoes on her feet.

The mother smiled to know her child
was in the sacred place,
but that smile was the last smile
to come upon her face.

For when she heard the explosion,
her eyes grew wet and wild.
She raced through the streets of Birmingham
calling for her child.

She clawed through bits of glass and brick,
then lifted out a shoe.
"O, here's the shoe my baby wore,
but, baby, where are you?"

– Dudley Randall



Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906)

THE HAUNTED OAK

PRAY why are you so bare, so bare,
Oh, bough of the old oak-tree;
And why, when I go through the shade you throw,
Runs a shudder over me?

My leaves were green as the best, I trow,
And sap ran free in my veins,
But I saw in the moonlight dim and weird
A guiltless victim's pains.

I bent me down to hear his sigh;
I shook with his gurgling moan,
And I trembled sore when they rode away,
And left him here alone.

They'd charged him with the old, old crime,
And set him fast in jail:
Oh, why does the dog howl all night long,
And why does the night wind wail?

He prayed his prayer and he swore his oath,
And he raised his hand to the sky;
But the beat of hoofs smote on his ear,
And the steady tread drew nigh.

Who is it rides by night, by night,
Over the moonlit road?
And what is the spur that keeps the pace,
What is the galling goad?

And now they beat at the prison door,
"Ho, keeper, do not stay!
We are friends of him whom you hold within,
And we fain would take him away

"From those who ride fast on our heels
With mind to do him wrong;
They have no care for his innocence,
And the rope they bear is long."

They have fooled the jailer with lying words,
They have fooled the man with lies;

The bolts unbar, the locks are drawn,
And the great door open flies.

Now they have taken him from the jail,
And hard and fast they ride,
And the leader laughs low down in his throat,
As they halt my trunk beside.

Oh, the judge, he wore a mask of black,
And the doctor one of white,
And the minister, with his oldest son,
Was curiously bedight.

Oh, foolish man, why weep you now?
'Tis but a little space,
And the time will come when these shall dread
The mem'ry of your face.

I feel the rope against my bark,
And the weight of him in my grain,
I feel in the throe of his final woe
The touch of my own last pain.

And never more shall leaves come forth
On the bough that bears the ban;
I am burned with dread, I am dried and dead,
From the curse of a guiltless man.

And ever the judge rides by, rides by,
And goes to hunt the deer,
And ever another rides his soul
In the guise of a mortal fear.

And ever the man he rides me hard,
And never a night stays he;
For I feel his curse as a haunted bough,
On the trunk of a haunted tree.

At least 3,446 African Americans were lynched between 1882 and 1968. In the 1960s, murder was still used as a tool to suppress civil rights workers, both black and white: Medgar Evers was assassinated June 12, 1963; Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman were murdered on June 21, 1964; and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated on April 4th, 1968. Even in 2003, 2,548 hate crimes against African

Americans were reported by the FBI, including 4 murders. An additional 4,941 crimes (including 10 murders) were committed that year because of the victim's race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability.

Paul Laurence Dunbar was America's first professional black literary man (Braxton, ix). The above poem appeared in Dunbar's 1903 collection *Lyrics of Love and Laughter*. It can also be found in:

- Dunbar, Paul Laurence. *The Collected Poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar*. Joanne M. Braxton, ed. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993.

Courage

It is in the small things we see it.
The child's first step,
as awesome as an earthquake.
The first time you rode a bike,
wallowing up the sidewalk.
The first spanking when your heart
went on a journey all alone.
When they called you crybaby
or poor or fatty or crazy
and made you into an alien,
you drank their acid
and concealed it.

Later,
if you faced the death of bombs and bullets
you did not do it with a banner,
you did it with only a hat to
cover your heart.
You did not fondle the weakness inside you
though it was there.
Your courage was a small coal
that you kept swallowing.
If your buddy saved you
and died himself in so doing,
then his courage was not courage,
it was love; love as simple as shaving soap.

Later,
if you have endured a great despair,
then you did it alone,
getting a transfusion from the fire,
picking the scabs off your heart,
then wringing it out like a sock.
Next, my kinsman, you powdered your sorrow,
you gave it a back rub
and then you covered it with a blanket
and after it had slept a while

it woke to the wings of the roses
and was transformed.

Later,
when you face old age and its natural conclusion
your courage will still be shown in the little ways,
each spring will be a sword you'll sharpen,
those you love will live in a fever of love,
and you'll bargain with the calendar
and at the last moment
when death opens the back door
you'll put on your carpet slippers
and stride out.

-Anne Sexton