Strange Fruit

Billie Holiday

Southern trees bear a strange fruit,

Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,

Black bodies swaying in the Southern breeze,

Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of the gallant South,

The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,

Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh,

Then the sudden smell of burning flesh.

Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck,

For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,

For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop,

Here is a strange and bitter fruit.

Incident

Countee Cullen

Once riding in old Baltimore,

Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,

I saw a Baltimorean

Keep looking straight at me.

Now I was eight and very small,

And he was no whit bigger,

And so I smiled, but he poked out

His tongue, and called me, “Nigger.”

I saw the whole of Baltimore

From May until December;

Of all the things that happened there

That’s all that I remember

My Arkansas

Maya Angelou

# There is a deep brooding

# in Arkansas.

# Old crimes like moss pend

# from poplar trees.

# The sullen earth

# is much too

# red for comfort.

Sunrise seems to hesitate

and in that second

lose its

incandescent aims, and

dusk no more shadows

than the noon.

The past is brighter yet.

Old hates and

ante-bellum lace, are rent

but not discarded.

Today is yet to come

In Arkansas.

It writhes. It writhes in awful

waves of brooding.

# I Too

# Langston Hughes

# 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.