

# We real cool by gwendolyn brooks

Literature



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We Real Cool WE REAL COOL Titus Rock Manickam Order No. 268617 19

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## WE REAL COOL

### Thesis

This poem by Gwendolyn Brooks is the miniature model of the contrasts of life in exquisite finesse.

### Introduction

Of all poems ever written, We Real Cool by Gwendolyn Brooks appears to be the most succinct and slick. The poet has minced words to the extent of losing out without being noticed. For some, the feeling is that the poem is unfinished. The carefully chosen words, however, strike deep impression.

There is the unmistakable joie de vivre that leaves one rereading the poem a  
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couple of times to get the full beauty. And before long the poem is there with you. You think about it. You trace it back while you are brushing your teeth, leaving for the office, mulling over some controversial decision, or just doing plain thinking.

### Youngsters

The poem is basically about school drop outs. They are idling away their time. They are hanging out in the poolroom when they should be in their class rooms. These youngsters have no qualm in staying late in the poolroom long after the class hours are over. They are quietly enjoying the environment with a glass of gin. The poem is a depiction of circumstances these young people choose to live in.

However, there is an air of uncertainty in the poem. There is the awareness that something is wrong somewhere. There is also that awareness that they have chosen the poolroom because of its merry abandon. They cannot think of any better place to be in. Nonetheless, the awareness that this is the ultimate place to be in rather than the school shows a certain disregard for norms. The closing lines of the poem brings out the truth of the position the young people put themselves in:

Jazz June,

We die soon.

The thought of death haunts them. It is there. There is no escaping the ultimate chapter of one's life. So, because we die soon, let us make merry and live a life of games and gaiety. They are not impressed by the responsibilities that come with school life. They do not think that they will be less happy tomorrow if they miss school today. If school is drudgery, what follows school life is also to be shunned.

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There is also the feeling that they do not like to study because study involves a certain amount of cramming, observing and waiting. They appear indifferent to the efforts of school life. These lines suggest that they prefer shooting straight. They say:

We lurk late,

We strike straight.

Conclusion

Using few words, the poet has illustrated the complete feelings of a group of young people whose way of life although questionable is satisfactory, at least to the young people. The poem may be insignificant because of its size. But in terms of the meaning it expounds the happy-go-lucky factor. Let us be happy today. For tomorrow we die!



Source:

An interview with Brooks by George Stavros, Modern American Poetry,  
[http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a\\_f/brooks/werealcool.htm](http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a_f/brooks/werealcool.htm)