

Analysis of "we wear the mask" by paul laurence dunbar essay sample

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



Analysis of “ We Wear the Mask” by Paul Laurence Dunbar Essay Sample

“ We Wear the Mask” by Paul Laurence Dunbar was first published in 1896, a time when African-Americans, like Paul Laurence Dunbar, had very little rights. This poem deals directly with the racism that African-Americans faced. The views of the whole American-American community are expressed because of Dunbar’s use of the word “ we”. This poem contains a lot of figurative language and other literary techniques.

The poem starts with Dunbar speaking for the entire black community. He expresses his anger of having to hide his emotions. When they are being lynched and discriminated against, they are forced to take it and mask their true emotions with a smile. In the third stanza, Dunbar tells of how they try crying to Christ for help. The rest of the world, however, ignored their cries and were not aware of the black community’s struggle for equal rights. The last line of the poem shows Dunbar realization that their efforts are not working, and they will continue to have to “ wear the mask”.

The tone of the poem is a combination of anger, despair, and sadness.

Dunbar expresses his anger of having to hide his emotions.

With torn and bleeding hearts we smile, And mouth with myriad subtleties.

(lines 3-4)The fourth line explains that African-Americans were not allowed to verbalize their ideas. The last stanza expresses the idea of sadness and despair. They try to cry out to Christ for help, but they continue to be discriminated against and have to “ wear the mask.”” We Wear the Mask”

has a very interesting rhyme pattern: AABBA AABC AABBAC. The poem is broken up into three stanzas. They are all different lengths with the first stanza having five lines, the second having four lines, and the last stanza having six lines. The last lines in the second and third stanza are both " We wear the mask". I thought it was important to notice the fact that those two lines are indented. They are also different in the fact that they are the only lines to contain only four syllables. With the exception of those two lines and line 5, the rest of the poem is written in iambic tetrameter.

There are a few examples of literary tools being used in this poem. There is an example of assonance in the third stanza.

Beneath our feet, and long the mile; But let the world dream otherwise,(lines 13-14)In those two lines, the long " e" sound is used in the words " beneath", " feet", and " dream". There is also alliteration in the last stanza.

But let the world dream otherwise, We wear the mask.(lines 14-15)The " w" sound is used in the beginning of a word three times in those two lines.

Repetition is used in " We Wear the Mask". The line " We wear the mask" is used once in every stanza and is the title of the poem. I think this helps to emphasize the horrors that African-Americans had to go through in the past.