Theme for English B BY [LANGSTON HUGHES](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/langston-hughes)

The instructor said,

*Go home and write*

*a page tonight.*

*And let that page come out of you—*

*Then, it will be true.*

I wonder if it’s that simple?

I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem.

I went to school there, then Durham, then here

to this college on the hill above Harlem.

I am the only colored student in my class.

The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem,

through a park, then I cross St. Nicholas,

Eighth Avenue, Seventh, and I come to the Y,

the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator

up to my room, sit down, and write this page:

It’s not easy to know what is true for you or me

at twenty-two, my age. But I guess I’m what

I feel and see and hear, Harlem, I hear you.

hear you, hear me—we two—you, me, talk on this page.

(I hear New York, too.) Me—who?

Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.

I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.

I like a pipe for a Christmas present,

or records—Bessie, bop, or Bach.

I guess being colored doesn’t make me *not* like

the same things other folks like who are other races.

So will my page be colored that I write?

Being me, it will not be white.

But it will be

a part of you, instructor.

You are white—

yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.

That’s American.

Sometimes perhaps you don’t want to be a part of me.

Nor do I often want to be a part of you.

But we are, that’s true!

As I learn from you,

I guess you learn from me—

although you’re older—and white—

and somewhat more free.

This is my page for English B.

(1951)

WHAT IT’S LIKE TO BE A BLACK GIRL   
(FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO AREN’T)   
By Patricia Smith   
  
first of all, it’s being 9 years old and   
feeling like you’re not finished, like your   
edges are wild, like there’s something,   
everything, wrong, it’s dropping food coloring   
in your eyes to make them blue and suffering   
their burn in silence. It’s popping a bleached   
white mophead over the kinks of your hair and   
primping in front of mirrors that deny your   
reflection. It’s finding a space between your   
legs, a disturbance at your chest, and not knowing   
what to do with the whistles, it’s jumping   
double dutch until your legs pop, it’s sweat   
and Vaseline and bullets, it’s growing tall and   
wearing a lot of white, it’s smelling blood in   
your breakfast, it’s learning to say \*\*\*\* with   
grace but learning to \*\*\*\* without it, it’s   
flame and fists and life according to Motown,   
it’s finally having a man reach out for you   
then caving in   
around his fingers.

this morning (for the girls of eastern high school)

by Lucile Clifton

this morning   
this morning   
i met myself   
coming in   
  
a bright   
jungle girl   
shining   
quick as a snake   
a tall   
tree girl a   
me girl   
i met myself   
this morning   
coming in   
  
and all day   
i have been   
a black bell   
ringing   
i survive   
survive!