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!