

Module 8: Page 274:

Below are two of the most famous poems of **James Langston Hughes**: read them carefully and after discussing their message with the help of your teacher, try to learn by heart the one you like best.

Minstrel Man¹

Because my mouth
Is wide with laughter
And my throat
Is deep with song,
You do not think
I suffer after
I have held my pain
So long?

Because my mouth
Is wide with laughter,
You do not hear
My inner cry?
Because my feet
Are gay with dancing,
You do not know
I die²

I Too

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.

¹ Minstrel men were Black street dancers and musicians who entertained passers' by (passanti). they never imagined that these Blacks were laughing only to earn money, and that they suffered just like everybody else.

² ho la morte nel cuore

Activities:

1. Answer the following questions:

1. What is a minstrel man?
2. Why do you think the black minstrel suffers? Because:
 - o He doesn't like his job
 - o He is not valued by white men
3. What pain has he held for so long?
4. What is the white people's attitude towards the black people the black boy of the poem "I too"?
5. Does the boy say he belongs to America despite the colour of his skin?
6. Why do white people tell the black boy to eat in the kitchen?
7. Why will white people be "ashamed"?

2. What's your opinion?

Do you agree with the poet's message? What's your opinion of these poems? Which of them do you like better? Why?

3. Design an advertisement and make up a slogan against racial violence.