

# We Wear the Mask

Paul Laurence Dunbar, 1872 - 1906

We wear the mask that grins and lies,  
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—  
This debt we pay to human guile;  
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile  
And mouth with myriad subtleties,

Why should the world be over-wise,  
In counting all our tears and sighs?  
Nay, let them only see us, while  
    We wear the mask.

We smile, but oh great Christ, our cries  
To thee from tortured souls arise.  
We sing, but oh the clay is vile  
Beneath our feet, and long the mile,  
But let the world dream otherwise,  
    We wear the mask!