

Name: _____

Directions: After reading the poem, answer the questions thoroughly in legible, complete sentences.

We Wear the Mask

Paul Laurence Dunbar

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, O 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!

1. Describe the speaker of this poem.
2. Who else might be able to relate to this poem? Why?
3. What is the major symbol in this poem? Why is it appropriate? Explain.
4. In your own words, explain what wearing the mask represents in this poem?
5. How does “We Wear the Mask” tie into Quarter 4’s theme of “The American Dream: Reality or Illusion”?