"We Wear the Mask" Worksheet Name:	Date:
Read the poem and answer the questions below.	
We Wear the Mask By Paul Laurence Dunbar	4. We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
By Paul Laurence Dunoar	Find the alliteration in the line above:
 1 We wear the mask that grins and lies, 2 It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,— 3 This debt we pay to human guile; 4 With torn and bleeding hearts we smile, 5 And mouth with myriad subtleties. 6 Why should the world be over-wise, 7 In counting all our tears and sighs? 	5. Consonance is similar consonant sounds. Alliteration is similar consonant sounds at the <u>beginning</u> of words, so alliteration is a special type of consonance. Let's find consonance that's not at the beginning of words.
8 Nay, let them only see us, while 9 We wear the mask.	It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes
10 We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries 11 To thee from tortured souls arise. 12 We sing, but oh the clay is <u>vile</u> 13 Beneath our feet, and long the mile;	In the line above you have consonance in the dz-sound in the words <i>hi<u>des</u></i> and <i>sha<u>des</u>. Try to find another example of consonance at the end of two words in that same line:</i>
14 But let the world dream <u>otherwise</u> , 15 We wear the mask!	6. Assonance is similar <u>vowel sounds</u> in nearby words.
Let's figure out the rhyme scheme or pattern.	We wear the mask that grins and lies, It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
1. Lines 1 and 2 rhyme at the end with <i>lies</i> and <i>eyes</i> . Lines 6 and 7 have the same rhyme with <i>over-wise</i> and <i>sighs</i> . Find three more lines that rhyme with lines 1.2.6 and 7 and write	In the two lines above you have the long i-sound in the words <i>lies, hides, eyes</i> .
three more lines that rhyme with lines 1, 2, 6 and 7 and write the line numbers:	Where does assonance occur in the line below?
	Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
2. Find five more lines that rhyme with each other and write the line numbers:	
	7. Where does assonance occur in the line below?
Alliteration, consonance, and assonance	We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
3. Alliteration is the same <u>beginning</u> consonant sound in nearby words. For example, in " <u>c</u> razy <u>k</u> etchup" both words	
begin with the hard c or k sound.	8. Now for a little meter .
Nay, let them only see us, while	We was an High according to the desired to the second transfer of th
We wear the mask.	We wear the mask that grins and lies,
Find the alliteration in the above two lines (look at the beginning sounds of words):	da DUM \parallel da DUM \parallel da DUM \parallel da DUM
	Notice that the second syllable (the bolded parts) is stressed . You say those syllables more loudly and with more emphasis. This creates a special rhythm . If you were to play this on a drum, you would beat every second syllable harder than the one before da DUM \parallel da DUM \parallel da DUM .

iamb. There are four of them, so this meter is called iambic tetrameter ("tetra" means four).	them. Find three more.
1 2 3 4 It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,— 1 2 3 unstressed stressed unstressed stressed unstressed	15. The person speaking in the poem is called the speaker . It is not always the poet though it could be. When the speaker says,
stressed unstressed stressed	This debt we pay to human guile;
Underline the syllables that are stressed in the line below:	what does he mean by "human guile"?
This debt we pay to human guile;	
Is this iambic tetrameter or something else?	16. How do we pay off our debt to human guile? by doing what?
9. Underline the syllables that are stressed in the line below:	
We wear the mask!	17. What kind of figure of speech is contained in this line?
Bonus question! Is this iambic tetrameter? If not, what is it called?	10 T 41 T
Now we're going to try to figure out what this poem means	18. In this line,
or is trying to say. To do that you have to first look up any words you don't know.	And mouth with myriad subtleties.
words you don't know.	what part of speech is "mouth"?
10. Write down the meaning of the six underlined words in	a adiantica
the poem. Be sure to choose the definition in the dictionary that fits the meaning of the word as it is used in the poem.	a. adjective b. noun
Also, write the part of speech of the word, as it is used in the	
poem. The first one has been done for you:	d. adverb
guile (noun) skillful deceit or trickery	e. none of the above
game (according to the control of th	19. What does "mouth" mean in the line above?
11. Now write a sentence using each word you looked up in	
#10.	a. part of the body that we eat and speak with b. to speak
12. Research: Read about the life of Paul Lawrence Dunbar	c. to frown
on the internet. Who do you think "we" refers to in the	d. to smile
poem? In other words, who is "we"?	e. none of the above
	20. In the following lines,
13. True or false? The mask that "we" wear is a mask that shows our suffering and misery. Find at least two lines that support your answer:	Why should the world be over-wise, In counting all our tears and sighs?
support your unioner.	what does "over-wise" mean?
	a. too knowing
	b. too smart-alecky
	c. finished
	d. upside down e. none of the above
14. We wear a mask to deceive other people, so they don't know what we really feel or think. Find the words in the	

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first stanza that suggest deception. lies and hides are two of

actually are. 22. True or false? The speaker says that "we" should take off the mask so the world can see "our" real selves. Write below the line or lines that support your answer: 23. In the following lines,

21. True or false? In the above two lines, the speaker is

asking why should the world know how miserable "we"

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries To thee from tortured souls arise.

who is "thee"?

- 24. *Bonus question!* In the above lines, the speaker addresses Christ as if Christ were there with him. What kind of rhetorical device is this where someone who is absent is addressed?
- 25. True or false? Underneath the happy mask, "we" are really suffering and miserable. Find at least two quotes that support your answer:
- 26. In the line,

But let the world dream otherwise,

the speaker is saying the world should be allowed to

- a. believe that "we" are happy
- b. believe that "we" are miserable
- c. dream whatever the world wants to dream
- d. none of the above
- 27. Wearing a mask is a **metaphor** for what? (Hint: What is meant by wearing a mask? Is someone literally wearing a real mask?)

- 28. If you have done your research on Paul Lawrence Dunbar, you should know that he was an African American poet who was born in the late 1800s and died at the age of 33 in 1906. So, he was born not too long after the end of the Civil War and the emancipation of slaves. The "we" in the poem most likely represents the African Americans suffering from racism and discrimination. Why do you think "we" --African Americans -- wear the mask? Do they have to wear a mask? What would happen if they didn't wear a mask and showed the world how much they suffered? Write a short paragraph to answer this question.
- 29. Can the "we" stand for everyone? Do other people, besides African Americans, wear a mask? Do they hide what they really feel? What about you? Do you think you wear a mask sometimes? Write a short paragraph to answer this question.

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"We Wear the Mask" Worksheet Answers

- 1. lines 10, 11, 14
- 2. lines 3, 4, 8, 12, 13
- 3. the w-sound in $\underline{\mathbf{w}}$ hile $\underline{\mathbf{w}}$ e / $\underline{\mathbf{W}}$ ear
- 4. the hard c-sound in Christ ... cries
- 5. the s-sound at the end of cheeks...eyes
- 6. the long e-sound in beneath...feet
- 7. the long i-sound in smile...Christ...cries
- 8. This debt we pay to human guile; -- Yes, it's iambic tetrameter
- 9. No, it's iambic dimeter (2 feet to a meter).

10

myriad (adjectives) very many, a great number of

subtleties (noun) something that is deceptive or devious

nay (adverb) an archaic word for "no"

vile (adjective) disgusting, extremely unpleasant, miserably poor and degrading

otherwise (adverb) in another way; differently

- 11. Sentences should use the word with the meanings above.
- 12. "We" refers to African Americans of Dunbar's time suffering from racism and discrimination
- 13. False, "We wear the mask that grins..."; "With torn and bleeding hearts we smile"; "We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries"; "We sing, but oh the clay is vile" (any three)
- 14. shades, guile, subtleties
- 15. human deception or human trait of tricking people into believing a falsehood
- 16. by wearing a mask; in other words, by pretending to be happy on the outside when we are really suffering on the inside
- 17. personification (human guile, an abstract idea, is given the human trait being able to receive payment for debt, to being owed a debt)
- 18. c
- 19. b
- 20. a

26. a

- 21. True
- 22. False, "Nay, let them only see us, while / We wear the mask." OR "But let the world dream otherwise,"
- 23. Christ
- 24. apostrophe
- 25. True, "With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,"; "Why should the world be over-wise, / In counting all our tears and sighs?"; "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;" (any two)
- 27. Wearing a mask is a metaphor for hiding one's true thoughts and feelings and showing something different on the outside to the world.
- 28. Answers may vary somewhat. One answer might be: During the time period in which the poet lived, African Americans had to, in a sense, wear a mask to get along with white people. White people were responsible for the suffering of African Americans through racism and discrimination, so if blacks didn't wear a mask and the whites saw their suffering they would be disturbed in their idea that all was well. This could have provoked white people into treating African Americans even worse than they were treated because people often grow angry and lash out when their wrongs are held up to them. Another answer might be: African Americans might have worn a mask or hidden their suffering out of a sense of privacy or dignity or pride. Most people usually do not want to show everyone that they are suffering as it could be an admission of weakness or lack of self-control over their emotions.
- 28. Answers may vary. (Of course, African Americans are not the only ones to wear a mask. Anyone could wear a mask, so the experience described in the poem could be universalized and applied to all people.)

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