

Poem Meaning

This activity accompanies “Retort,” from *The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar* by Paul Laurence Dunbar, record number 4971.

Activity Title: Poem Meaning

Description: The students will interpret the meaning of the poem.

Subject: Reading/Language Arts

Skill: Literary Analysis

Behavioral Objective:

- The student will give textual support for interpreting the meaning of the poem.

Materials:

- “Retort” poem, available in audio and print form at <http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/>
- Paper and pencils

Procedures:

Read the poem with the class, or have the students read it on their own. Discuss with the students that poems can have multiple meanings. Have the students work individually to write an explanation for the meaning of the poem, using the text for support (including the title).

Some guiding questions (if necessary):

- What does the title of the poem mean?
- Why is the head calling the heart a fool?
- What are the head’s reasons?
- What makes the heart respond?
- What does the heart mean by his response?

