

Musical Themes

This activity accompanies “Melancholia,” from *The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar* by Paul Laurence Dunbar, record number 5027.

Activity Title: Musical Themes

Description: The students will recognize theme in a poem, and then write with that theme in mind.

Subject: Reading/Language Arts

Skill: Literary Analysis and Writing

Behavioral Objective:

- The student will recognize theme in a poem, and then write with that theme in mind.

Materials:

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

Procedures:

Read the poem with the students, or have them read it on their own. Discuss with the students the theme of the poem. Next, have the students think of a theme for a poem, and have them write three to five lines of their poem. Then, explain to the students that they are to pass their poem to the person to their right. Once the students pass their poems, turn on some music for about two to three minutes and instruct the students to add on to the new poem in front of them, until the music stops (think musical chairs). Make sure that when they add onto the poem they stick with the same theme as the beginning of the poem. Continue rotating until the poems seem to be completed. If this is the first time working with theme it may helpful to have the students write their themes at the top of their poem.

