

Sometimes We Fail

This activity accompanies “For the Man who Fails,” from *The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar* by Paul Laurence Dunbar, record number 5135.

Activity Title: Sometimes We Fail

Description: The students will write about a time they failed at something, and how Dunbar’s poem makes them feel about their effort.

Subject: Reading/Language Arts

Skill: Reading Comprehension and Text-to-self connections

Behavioral Objective:

- The student will write about a time he or she failed at something, and how Dunbar’s poem makes him or her feel about the effort.

Materials:

- “For the Man who Fails” poem, available in audio and print form at <http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/>
- Paper and pencil

Procedures:

Read the poem with the students, or have them read it on their own. Discuss with the students the main idea of the poem. Then, have the students choose a time in their life when they tried and failed at something. For example, losing a sports game, not finishing first in competition, not doing as well on a test as they thought they would, etc. Then, have the students write a poem or short story about their attempt and failure. When they are finished writing, have them read the poem a second time thinking about if that poem was written for them. Finally, have a class discussion about failure, and that sometimes the effort put forth is worth more than a victory in the end.

